

THE  
SILVER  
AGE  
OF  
COMIC  
BOOK  
ART

BY ARLEN SCHUMER



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SILVER  
AGE  
OF  
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BOOK  
ART



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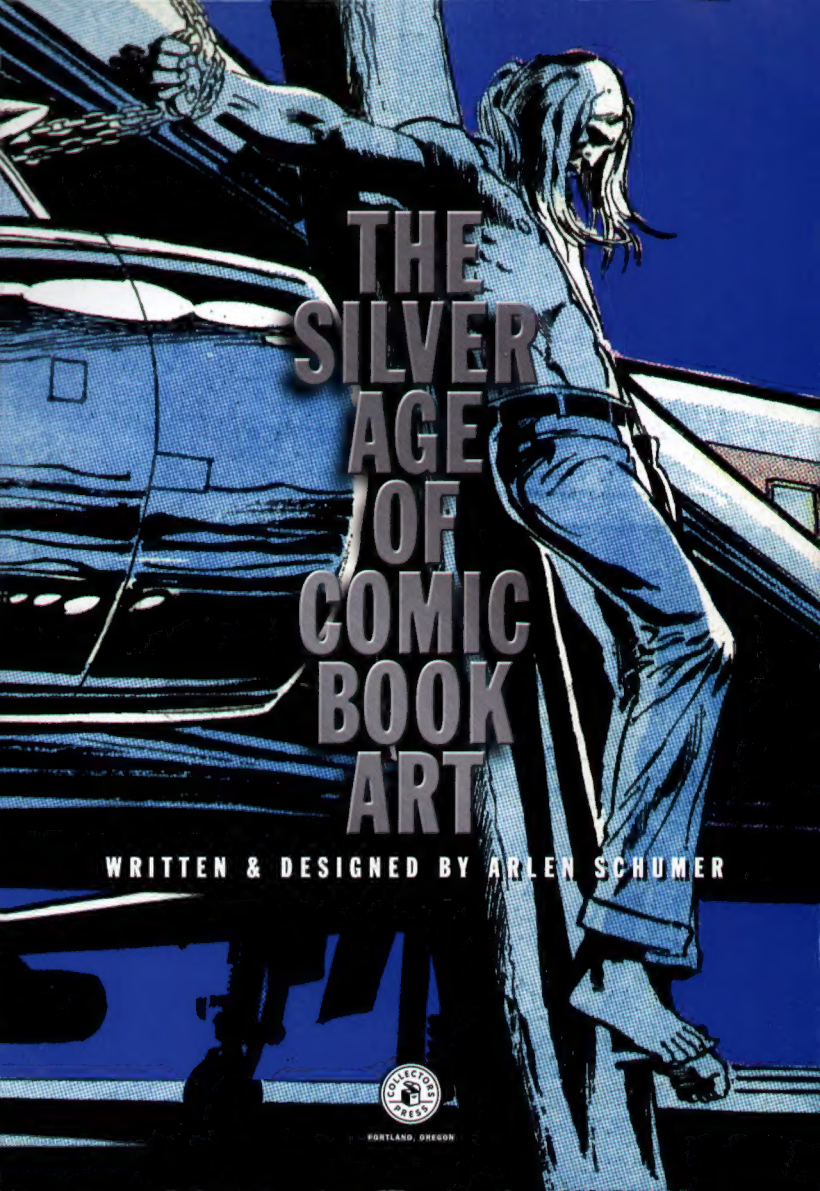
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# THE SILVER AGE OF COMIC BOOK ART

WRITTEN & DESIGNED BY ARLEN SCHUMER



PORTLAND, OREGON



# P R E F A C E

by Arlen Schumer

The genesis of this book began almost 25 years ago, when I was a senior at Rhode Island School of Design, majoring in graphic design. For my degree project, I toyed with designing an exhibit of comic book art. When I went looking for a theme, the only subject that seemed both worthwhile of my passion for the material and deep enough for the demands of the assignment was one based on the comics I grew up with in the 1960s. These comics and the artists who drew them were the twin founts from which I drew the inspiration to become an artist. Though I never did design that exhibit (I ended up doing a giant autobiographical photo-comic instead), I kept the ideas and images that I gathered, in the hopes that one day I'd use them in some other form. Many of those 1979 layouts are the same ones I've used in this book. Indeed, my introduction—in which I place the images and ideas you'll encounter throughout this book in a socio-political, historical framework—is composed of essentially the identical concepts from my aborted exhibit idea.

The idea to do a book on this period of comic book history goes back even further, to 1970, when Jim Steranko wrote, designed and published the first of his two-volume *History of Comics*. Written on the heels of his amazing barnstorming stint at Marvel Comics (see his chapter here), these books remain the best of their kind. They were—and continue to be—a source of inspiration. Though Steranko's books were about the Golden Age of Comics (circa 1938–1950), the period he grew up with and was affected by, not the Silver Age of Comics (circa 1956–1972) that I, and the entire baby boom generation, was turned on to.

Steranko himself might have been inspired by the first great book about comic book history, Jules Feiffer's 1965 *The Great Comic Book Heroes*. Feiffer's book consists of wonderfully written, witty essays on specific Golden Age superheroes he followed avidly as a boy, accompanied by reprints of the origins or earliest adventures of those heroes. Feiffer may not have realized what it was like for me, an eight year-old comic book fan in 1966, to hear that there was actually a book in the Fair Lawn, New Jersey public library about comics!

But Feiffer's book, as serendipitous as it was, was also not about the heroes or the artists I was interested in, artists who rank among the greatest American artists of the Twentieth (and Twenty-First) Century. There has never been a coffee-table book celebrating their work, showing the actual printed comic book art—with ben-day dots on cheap newsprint—as it was transmitted to and perceived by the readership. Other books have been illustrated with the black and white original art, and as beautiful as that is, that's production art, as far as I'm concerned. The recent spate of reprints, though they serve a noble purpose, remove the original coloring and replace it with garish colors on harsh white paper.

Although most of the comics in those days were poorly printed, with off-registration rampant, there was something beautiful about them, too. In trying to capture the integrity of the original printed art while also "cleaning" it up, I assumed the role of art restorer: not recoloring, but retouching. I took license here and there to drop out the original word balloon and caption text in favor of artists' quotes or my own prose. My justification is that this book is not about the characters per se, nor is it about the "stories." There are plenty of books about both topics, and this book is not a substitute for either type; of course the play's the thing. I wanted to create, instead, the first true art book about comic book artists and their work. Therefore, my entire design approach—utilizing reliefs, drop shadows and enlargements—has been to treat each spread as if it were a 13-foot by 18-foot museum wall exhibit. I suppose I have come full circle, with me as your curator, exhibiting—for the first time—the glorious artwork by the greatest artists of our generation.

And that, in the end, is the true genesis of this book: I am of the generation that spent countless hours—upon days, and into years—reading and studying and collecting and drawing from these sacred comic books. I shared—and still share—those happy, special times with really only one other person in the world. And that is why this book is dedicated to my best friend, my mentor, and the real editor of this book: my brother Steve.



Illustration by the author and his wife, color artist Sherri Wolfgang (as the Dynamic Duo Studio) for the "Design Scene Visual Commentary" end page in the July/August 1992 issue of *Print*.

# INTRODUCTION . . . . . 6

"I began as an artist, but I ended up as a designer."

*INFANTINO* . . . . . 22

"I liked drawing, the kind of drawing done for comics."

*Steve Ditko* . . . . . 42

"I achieved perfection, my type of perfection—visual storytelling."

*JACK KIRBY* . . . . . 72

"The only thing that makes [comics] worth reading is the art."

*GILL KANE* . . . . . 104

"The artwork is not the message. The artwork is the medium."

*(JOE KUBER)* . . . . . 116

"Every story I ever drew was like being the director of a film."

*Gene Colan* . . . . . 128

"I don't consider myself an artist...I'm just a storyteller."

*STERANKO* . . . . . 136

"We're telling stories; some people think we're creating art."

*NEAL ADAMS* . . . . . 150

# BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . 175

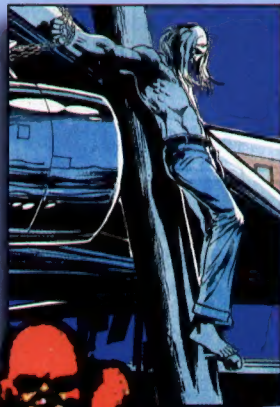


# IN T O D U C T I O N

## IN THE SILVER AGE OF COMICS (CIRCA 1956-1970),

superheroes started out as champions but ended up as chumps. They went from being self-confident heroes to fallen idols who doubted and questioned the very authorities that had made them de facto deputies in the fight against evil. Evil was no longer delineated in the same black and white terms that had previously defined the superheroes' four-color existences, but was now limned in shades of grey. Superheroes went through the same transformation the rest of America's heroes went through in the 1960s when racial strife, political assassinations and the Vietnam War exacted their toll on the country's spirit and vision of itself. Before the superhero took a place in the American heroic pantheon, the kind of cowboys and soldiers John Wayne played in the movies had been the heroic ideal. This heroic archetype however, all but vanished by the end of the decade, replaced by antiheroes in films like Bonnie & Clyde and Midnight Cowboy, the motorcycle jockeys of Easy Rider, the diffident docs of M.A.S.H. — all soldiers of a sort fighting their own wars against the establishment.

Similarly, superheroes in comic books, establishment conservatives like Superman, The Flash and Green Lantern, were displaced by super-anti-heroes, counterculture liberals like Spider-Man, Doctor Strange, and



Green Arrow. Even the look of comic book art reflected this changing of the guard as the early 1960s futuristic idealism of artists Carmine Infantino and Gil Kane gave way first to the pop explosion of Jack Kirby, then to the late 1960s psychedelia of Jim Steranko and the photorealism of Neal Adams.

Like the American youth counterculture that reached its apogee in the 1960s from germinations in the 1950s Beat generation, the superhero comic-counterculture of the 1960s also flowered from seeds planted in the previous decade at the dawn of the Silver Age when events in both the real and comic book worlds coincided. The Soviets' surprise launching of Sputnik in 1957 shocked America out of its Eisenhower-era complacency and into scientific

action, centered around speed (with which to beat the Russians), space (the target), and technology (the means to get there). Just as in the old "hot" war, when superheroes like Captain America aided the war effort at home by hawking war bonds and

**Background:** Carmine Infantino's early 1960s suburban-modern milieu, inked by Anderson, from *The Flash* #152, May 1968. "This was my idea of what suburban should look like," Infantino said. "I grew up with the old Andy Hardy movies, where everything's kind of picture perfect!"

**Inset this page:** The apotheosis of the early 1960s DC Comics technohero the Atom in exalted gratitude to science and technology, as rendered by Gil Kane & Murphy Anderson, from *Showcase* #34, Oct. 1961, the character's first appearance. **Inset, opposite:** A decade later, attitudes toward technology had changed. A protector goes to extreme lengths to stop the SST. It was Neal Adams' realistic style that helped make attempts like this one from *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #89, May 1972 not only possible, but believable.



The Flash #1, Jan. 1940, by Sheldon Mendoff.

Green Lantern #1, Fall 1941, by Howard Purcell.

The Atom, from *All-Star Comics* #3, Winter 1940, by Ben Flinton.

Panel, from *The Flash* #149, Dec. 1964, by Infantino and Anderson.

Double-page pinup, from *Green Lantern* #46, Jul. 1966, by Gil Kane.

Double-page pinup, from *The Atom* #26, Sep. 1966, by Kane.





**Background:** Steve Ditko placed Spider-Man in a drab New York City setting (final panel of *Amazing Fantasy* #15, Aug. 1962) that perfectly matched his stature in the 1960s first super-anthihero. **Above:** Police scientist Barry Allen, from *The Flash* #148, Nov. 1964, by Infantino and Anderson. **Below:** High school science student Peter Parker, from *Amazing Fantasy* #15, by Ditko.



striking patriotic cover poses, this new Cold War called for its own super-heroic standard bearers. It was no wonder then that DC Comics, which had been trolling for new genres to exploit after most of their World War II-spawned superheroes had died out years before for lack of popularity, ignited a second superhero boom when it began its new foray into the superhero field with remodeled, higher-tech versions of their mothballed war heroes: super-speedster The Flash (who doubled as police scientist Barry Allen), power ring-wielding outer space adventurer Green Lantern (alias Hal Jordan, test pilot with the right stuff), and The Atom (research scientist Ray Palmer) who had the ability to shrink to microscopic size (in stark contrast to his 1940s counterpart who was merely a diminutive strongman). The U.S. government, through newly formed agencies like NASA, promoted their Mercury Astronauts as real-life costumed heroes for the Space Age. DC coincidentally responded with Adam Strange, billed as "Earth's First Spaceman."

The artist who drew both The Flash and Adam Strange, Carmine Infantino, visually embodied the new ideals of this new age. The cities The Flash ran through were stylized compositions of futuristically slanted spires. Suburban homes all came out of advanced California modern motifs of the era. Infantino's trademark long,



low panels filled with trim, lithe figures were as sleek and streamlined as the fins Detroit was sporting on all its cars of the era. Everything Infantino drew reflected the crystal-clean images of America promulgated then by Hollywood and Madison Avenue in its entertainment and advertising. As the country headed into an unprecedented era of wealth and prosperity with eyes toward the future, Infantino's style mirrored these ethereal notions more accurately than his DC contemporaries, Curt Swan, Joe Kubert and Gil Kane, and perhaps better than any other comic book artist of his time.

But over at Marvel Comics, where Kirby and writer/editor Stan Lee were beginning to challenge DC's hegemony in the superhero field with offbeat creations like The Fantastic Four and The Hulk, artist Steve Ditko's pages were bleak and grey, peopled by equally drab characters of plain, everyman appearance. As co-created by Ditko and Lee in 1962, Spider-Man's alter ego, Peter Parker, was a shy, weak, laughed-at and pushed-around egghead. More importantly, though,

**Above right:** The Flash, typically slickly rendered DC Comics establishment hero, over thirty years of age, self-assured and respectful of authority, spouting dialogue the likes of which would be heard later on the 1966 Batman TV show, from *The Flash* #149, Dec. 1964, by Infantino and Anderson. **Right:** In contrast, Ditko's appealingly primitive style and harsher, cruder approach made Spider-Man, and Stan Lee's dialogue, ring true, from *Amazing Fantasy* #15.

OH, BY THE WAY, FLASH-- THIS LETTER CAME FOR THE SPECIAL BOX YOU MAINTAIN HERE AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS!

THANKS, SERGEANT! PROBABLY ANOTHER APPEAL FROM SOMEONE WHO NEEDS FLASH'S HELP...



I OUGHTTA RUN YOU IN--

SAVE YOUR BREATH, BUDDY! I'VE GOT THINGS TO DO!





A doctor and his mentor, pictured in two different forms of early 1960s American popular media. **Below:** Television's Ben Casey (actor Vince Edwards) practiced western medicine under the aegis of Dr. David Zorba (Sam Jaffe), 1963.



**Right:** Ditko's Dr. Strange and the Ancient One engaged in an ecstasie visualization of Eastern mystic mind-molding from the splash panel of *Strange Tales* #137, Oct. 1965.

he was a teenager, unlike all of DC's new techno-heroes who were over thirty years old, the "parents" to Marvel's superyouth. Spider-Man also exhibited other differences — like initially wanting to make money from his new powers instead of fighting crime. These characteristics set him apart from the DC pantheon, anticipating the generation gap that was to split America later in the decade and qualified him as comicdom's breakout super-anti-hero. Indeed, the title of one of the very first mainstream media reports on Spider-Man and the Marvel Comics revolution was "Super-Anti-Hero in Forest Hills" by Sally Kempton in the April 1, 1965 *Village Voice*, in which she noted that Marvel's were "the first [superhero] comic books to evoke, even metaphorically, the Real World," and Spider-Man particularly



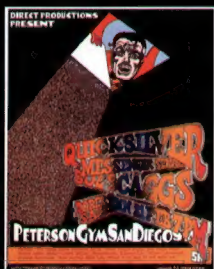
was one of the first in which "a post-adolescent escapist can get personally involved."

The other feature Ditko created in 1963, Dr. Strange, was as prescient in forecasting what was to become another major touchstone of the decade. Woven throughout the saga of a washed-up American surgeon who becomes an enlightened supersorcerer were bizarre, surrealistic visualizations never before seen in comic books, all uniquely Ditko's, which had a wide-ranging influence on the proto-counterculture that was beginning to use LSD to open new doors of perception into fantasy worlds that were distinctively Ditko-like. "He sits for hours on end reading comic books," Tom Wolfe wrote in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* of Merry Prankster Ken Kesey, who, while traveling on his Magic Bus spreading the LSD gospel across America in 1964, was "absorbed in the plunging purple Steve Ditko shadows of Dr. Strange..." Those shadows foreshadowed the psychedelic graphics of the late-'60s San Francisco rock music poster school — the very first posters for shows at Bill Graham's famous Fillmore West Ballroom in 1967 that specifically featured homages and pastiches of Doctor Strange — and many other Marvel superheroes, all of whom were crafted in similar degrees of antihierism.

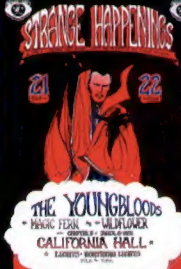
**Below:** For his 1967 poster for the Youngbloods concert at San Francisco's California Hall, artist Greg Irons borrowed the Dr. Strange pose from the Jack Kirby-drawn logo box, that debuted on the cover of *Strange Tales* #142, Mar. 1966.



**Right:** The artist "San Andreas Fault" lifted a Ditko Dr. Strange face (above) from *Strange Tales* #132, May 1965, for this 1969 Quicksilver Message Service/Box Scissors concert poster, but added "Homage to Steve Ditko" along with a "Marvel Comics (sic) Group" copyright notice. **Far right:** Program cover designed by Peter Bailey for the 1966 Trips Festival in San Francisco.



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**Left:** Ditko Dr. Strange splash panel detail, from *Strange Tales* #133, Jun. 1965.





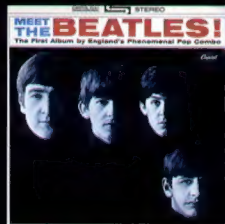


# T H E F I R S T F A B F O U R

As DC writer Arnold Drake observed about Marvel's growing popularity in a memo to DC's publisher in 1966, "The anthero was lifted from the hardcover books and slick magazines and brought to the kids...."

[Marvel] succeeded for two reasons primarily. First, they were more in tune with what was happening in the country than we were. And perhaps more important, they aimed their stuff at an age level that had never read comics before in any impressive number — the college level." Esquire Magazine evidently agreed, noting this burgeoning college infatuation in a September 1966 feature article that opined, "Marvel's super-heroes, in spite of their super-powers, have super problems. And that's why your college buddies are flipping over them." Like the anonymous Ivy Leagueer who was quoted at one of Lee's growing number of college lecture circuit stops, "We think of Marvel Comics as the

twentieth-century mythology and you as this generation's Homer." The art wasn't overlooked either (the article



**Background:** The Fantastic Four had the same impact on mainstream comic books in the 1960s as the Fab Four had on rock and roll (and would have scooped the Beatles had Marvel publisher Martin Goodman not changed Lee's original title for the group, the Fabulous Four, right before publication of the first issue in 1961). Illustration based on art by Jack Kirby, inked by Joe Sinnott, from *Fantastic Four* #44, Nov. 1965, after the *Meet the Beatles* album cover (inset), 1964 (photo by Robert Freeman).

itself snappily illustrated by none other than Kirby himself) when a Cornell University student, shown in silhouette next to a Kirby Dr. Strange, gushed that Marvels were "beautifully illustrated, to a nearly hallucinogenic extent. Even the simple mortal hero stories are illustrated with every panel as dramatically composed as anything Orson Welles ever put on film." Knowing what we know now about their careers and Marvel's eventual dominance, the 1960s juggernaut team of Lee and Kirby can be seen as the Lennon and McCartney of comics, just as prolific, just as startling, their work similarly developing in scope and profundity at an exponential rate. By 1967, they too were in the midst of the most creatively psychedelic phase of their work, having just unleashed a slew of cosmic characters and concepts, including *The Silver Surfer*, *Galactus*, and *The Black Panther*, in dizzying, dazzling succession.



DC never quite knew how to respond to Marvel but did "answer" Dr. Strange in the fall of 1967 with its own quasi-mystical character, Deadman, in the pages of the coincidentally titled *Strange Adventures*. Created by writer Drake and illustrated by the ubiquitous Infantino, Deadman was a daredevil trapeze artist shot dead in mid-swing, only to miraculously revive as a ghost with the power to inhabit the bodies of the living, thus enabling him to search for his killer. Within this premise, Drake was able to intertwine his take on the newly-fashionable (thanks largely to the Beatles) Eastern theories of reincarnation (Deadman's spiritual benefactor went by the Hindu-sounding name of Rama Kushna) with a lift from the recently concluded TV series *The Fugitive* in which the series star searched episode after episode for his wife's killer, a one-armed man (Deadman's killer instead had a hook in place of a missing hand).







The comic mission is carried by Marvel Comics, joining costs to be



On June 7, 1966, by Kirby and Blinnott. Said Kirby in a 1989 interview, "I came up with the *Black Panther* because... I suddenly discovered that I had a lot of black readers -- and here I am, a leading cartoonist, and I wasn't doing a 'black'." Detail from December 1966 AC Comics poster by Norman Hartwig (hand colored by Sunshine Kuey). Like this poster's central Thor image (based on *Journey Into Mystery* #228, Feb. 1966, by Kirby andinker Vinny Colletta, above), Marvel's superheroes were featured on the Magic Bus and had Marty Prankster Ken Koe (the originator of the Acid Tests), when it traveled across the country spreading then-legal LSD in 1964. *Rolling Stone* Sept. 26, 1973. Illustrated by Herb Trimps for the feature article on Marvel Comics, "Face Front! Call Your Handful! You're on the Comic Book!," in the same issue. Kirby's work was also influential in the comic book industry by giving his characters dimension, character, and personality. "Conterpsand": Illustration for *Esquire*, Jan. 1966, by Kirby. "If you saw my drawings in the '60s, you'll see the '80s reflected there." Kirby said in 1987, "That was what the '80s looked like."











by the latter's regular artists, but by Adams. By this time (April '68), the Batman TV series, an overnight sensation two years prior that resulted in a superhero sales boom not seen since World War II, had just been canceled. However, the TV series had reduced the actual comic book version of the character into a two-dimensional caricature of its TV counterpart (which was itself an exaggerated blow-up of the campiest, cartoonist elements of the Batman milieu of the 1950s). Adams instinctively grasped that this team-up with Deadman would be a chance to undo years of shabby treatment and restore the character's tarnished integrity to that of its original conception as a Shadow-like creature of the night. In one fell swoop, Adams accomplished this task (and went on to illustrate Batman scripts for the next six years, becoming, arguably, the definitive Batman artist).

Exactly a year later, in the same Batman team-up title, Adams revamped a second-string DC character, Green Arrow. Green Arrow was a trick archer who had degenerated, over the years, into a cheap copy of Batman, replete with Arrow Car, Arrow Cave, Arrow signal, ad nauseum. Adams threw out all of the character's excess baggage, redesigned his costume to emphasize a more modern-day Robin Hood resemblance, and added a mustache and goatee, which, in retrospect, was a bold gesture. Not only did it mark Green Arrow as the first superhero with facial hair, but its late-1960s timeliness hinted at a hipper personality that begged to be exploited.

That exploitation came soon enough. In 1970, when DC decided to partner Green Arrow with Green Lantern in an effort to stave off cancellation of the latter's title. By this time, in the wake of not only upstart Marvel Comics' overwhelming popularity but of the declining fortunes of the

Clockwise from top left: The Real Thing: Neal Adams' Deadman, from *Strange Adventures* #208, Jan. 1968. ■ The new Green Arrow by Adams, from the cover of *Brave & Bold* #88, Sep. 1968. ■ The naive Green Lantern, forced to confront Adams' realistically rendered reality, got his come-uppance, from *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #78, Apr. 1970. ■ The definitive Batman by Adams, from *Brave & Bold* #79, Sep. 1968.



stock heroic models their characters were based on, most of DC's techno-heroes had fallen by the wayside. DC's sales were eroding and their books were cancelled, just as the ideals they embodied were also crumbling in real-life America. Of all these righteously naive superheroes, who had seen the world in black and white absolutes and fought clichéd supervillains and mad scientists, while flying off into space for adventures on other worlds, Green Lantern was the most typical, the virtual personification of the American power establishment responsible for the country's presence in both Vietnam and outer space.

Adams and new scripter Denny

O'Neil, the verbal counterpart to Adams' visual hyperrealism, made good on the political potential inherent in Green Arrow's new Robin Hood appearance by injecting him with a blatant left-wing world view. "Robin Hood was the perfect antihero/rebel fight for the underdog hero model for the time," Adams said. "By making Green Arrow into a cool Robin Hood, I had served him up as an anti establishment foil to counter Green Lantern's conforming, status quo worshiping, white do-gooder, blind kind of 1950's creep attitude. Social consciousness was the name of the party at game, then, and Green Arrow became the focus of that surge."

ON THE STREETS OF MEMPHIS A GOOD BLACK MAN DIED... AND IN LOS ANGELES, A GOOD WHITE MAN FELL...  
SOMETHING IS WRONG! SOMETHING IS KILLING US ALL...! SOME HIDEOUS MORAL CANCER IS ROTTING OUR VERY SOULS!



Green Arrow became Green Lantern's conscience, exposing him, over the course of a remarkable thirteen issue run that extended into 1972, to the darker sides of 1960s America that Green Lantern — and, by extension, his readers — had never directly experienced nor imagined: injustice, bigotry, poverty, pollution, overpopulation, drug abuse, greed and gross materialism. O'Neil's words rang true because Adams' art was true: to life than any comic book art had been before.

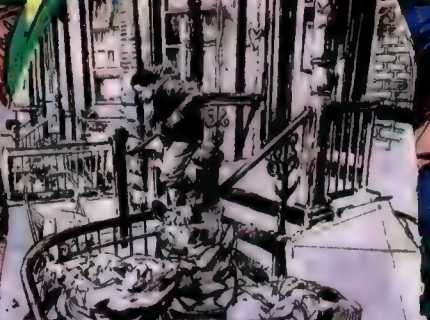
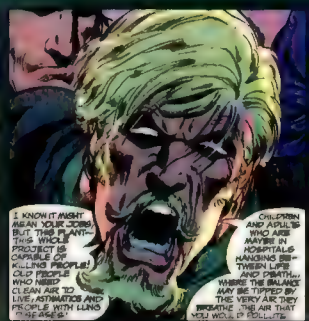
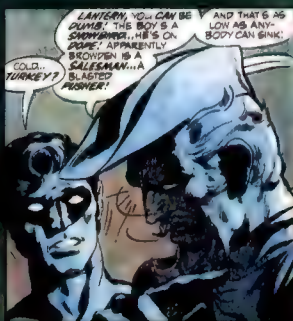
No matter that the Green Lantern/Green Arrow series was canceled prematurely, or that, after a brief flurry of knocked-off "rele-

vant" stories, superhero life in comic books reverted back to its fantasy shell for the remainder of the decade, the damage had been done. A chink had been exposed in the Silver Age armor.

Adams and O'Neil had debunked the sterile sanctimony of the DC superheroes' universe and brought them all down to earth, from an armed acceptance of the benevolence of science and technology, to a begrudging awareness of the corrupting consequences of power.

In comic book terms, The Sixties were over — the Silver Age of Comics had ended.

— Arian Schumer



Neal Adams' gallery of Green Lantern/Green Arrow images (written by Denny O'Neil). ◀ Adams captured, during an inner-city riot, the moment of impact of a single bullet. Panel from issue # 87, Jan. 1972.

◀ Panel from issue #88, Sep. 1971, the extreme irony of Green Arrow's idealistic "peace" using heroin made the cover (right), and the story within, perhaps the most memorable of the series. ◀ The climactic panel from the first issue of the series, #76, Apr. 1970, showing Adams' judicious use of photo reference. ◀ Torn from the headlines, the story in issue #80, Oct. 1970, was a science-fictionalized take on the infamous kangaroo

trial of the Chicago Seven for conspiracy to incite riot at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. ▶ Panel from issue #89, May 1972: through Green Arrow, O'Neil voiced the counterculture's most noble concerns. ▶ Compare the dialogue from Hal (Green Lantern) Jordan in this panel (issue #83, May 1971, inked by Dick Giordano), with this (issue #10, Jan. 1962, written by John Broome): "No one in the world suspects that at a moment's notice I can become mighty Green Lantern — with my amazing power ring and invincible green beam! Golly, what a feeling it is!" ▶ Detail from the splash page of "What Can One Man Do?", written by Elliot Maggin, issue #97.





# INFANTINO

**T**HOUGH HE HAD DRAWN FOR *MANY* COMIC BOOK PUBLISHERS SINCE HE WAS A *TEENAGER* IN THE 1940s -- THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMICS -- *CHARLIE* INFANTINO'S STYLE *MATURED AT DC COMICS* BY THE MID-1950s TO MAKE HIM THE *PREMIERE* DC ARTIST OF THE *SILVER AGE*. HE EARNED THIS TITLE WITH HIS ABSOLUTELY *MODERN* DELINEATION OF THE *FIRST* TRUE SILVER AGE HERO, SUPER-SPEEDSTER *THE FLASH* IN 1956. HIS TWO-DIMENSIONAL DEPICTIONS OF *SPEED AND MOTION* -- AMONG *MANY* GRAPHIC INNOVATIONS INFANTINO DEVELOPED DURING HIS *ELEVEN-YEAR* RUN ON THE STRIP -- REMAIN *SEVENCHUNKS* IN THE MEDIUM.

*SCIENCE FICTION* LANDSCAPES AND MOTIFS RECEIVED INFANTINO'S *SIGNATURE* STYLIZATION IN HIS CONCURRENT, *MEMORABLE* RUN ON DC'S INTERPLANETARY HERO *ADAM STRANGE*. WITH HIS MORE DOWN-TO-EARTH *BATMAN*, WHOM HE REDESIGNED FOR THE 1960s (CLEARING THE RUNWAY FOR THE *RUNAWAY* SUCCESS OF THE 1966 TELEVISION SERIES), INFANTINO *EARNED* HIS PLACE IN THE *PANTHEON OF DEFINITIVE BATMAN ARTISTS*.

INFANTINO'S *STRIKING* AND *SUCCESSFUL* COVER DESIGNS FOR *BATMAN* AND A *MIRIAD* OF DC TITLES LED TO HIS BEING NAMED *ART DIRECTOR* IN 1961, THEN *SUBSEQUENTLY*, *EDITORIAL DIRECTOR*, *PUBLISHER* AND FINALLY *PRESIDENT* OF DC COMICS, SETTING THE *STYLE* FOR THE COMPANY AND *LEADING* IT INTO ONE OF ITS MOST *FERTILE, CREATIVE PERIODS EVER* -- INFANTINO WAS THE *FIRST* ARTIST TO ATTAIN SUCH *HEIGHTS* IN THE *HISTORY* OF COMICS (THOUGH HE WAS THE *FIRST* ARTIST TO ATTAIN SUCH *HEIGHTS* IN THE *HISTORY* OF COMICS, IT CAME WITH A PRICE: THE DE FACTO LOSS OF INFANTINO TO THE COMIC BOOK ARTIST.

"THE *SYNTHESIS* OF MY ART IS IT *NEVER FULLY MATURED*," INFANTINO SAID IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY. "I *STOPPED* DRAWING IN FAVOR OF ATTAINING THE *EXECUTIVE* POSITIONS. MY *ARTWORK* IS AN *UNFINISHED SYMPHONY*. A PAINTING *NEVER* COMPLETED, A BABY *NEVER* RAISED. I'M NOT *LAMENTING* THE CREATIVE LOSS; NOBODY *FORCED* ME TO STOP DRAWING. WHAT *DIRECTION* MY *UNFINISHED SYMPHONY* *MIGHT* HAVE TAKEN REMAINS A *MYSTERY*."



# "I HAD A FEELING SUPERHEROES WERE READY TO COME BACK!"

— Carmine Infantino

"**A**T THE TIME, 1964, '65, THE COMICS BUSINESS WAS DYING -- WE EVEN HAD TO TAKE A **PAUSE CUT!** ALL THE COMPANIES WERE TRYING EVERYTHING: SCIENCE FICTION, ROMANCE, WESTERN, AND I FIGURED I BETTER CREATE SOMETHINGS FOR MYSELF, JUST IN CASE I CAN SELL IT, AND GO OFF WITH IT

Captain Marvel, by original artist and co-creator C.C. Beck, circa 1960. "I was a big fan of Captain Marvel," admitted Infantino, adding from the character's similar name, the lightning insignia and same levin color scheme made him the visual antecedent to Captain Whiz—aka The Flash!

"SO I CREATED THIS CHARACTER, CAPTAIN WHIZ, AND THE COLORS OF EYE -- HIS OWN GROUP OF VILLAINS, EACH A DIFFERENT COLOR. THEN, WHEN DC COMICS WRITER BOB KANISHER CAME UP WITH THE NEW FLASH IN 1966, HE CAME TO VISIT ME, AND SAID WHAT ABOUT USING SOME OF THAT STUFF YOU **ALREADY** DID? THESE WERE ALL THE CHARACTERS THAT EVENTUALLY BECAME THE FLASH, AND ALL HIS VILLAINS! CAPTAIN WHIZ'S COSTUME WAS ALMOST EXACTLY THE SAME!

"I HAD DONE A FEW DESIGNS, PLAYED WITH A COUPLE OF IDEAS, SOME WITH HAIR SHOWING, BUT I DIDN'T

LIKE THAT I HAD SOME WITH VERY FANCY BOOTS, BUT THEY WEREN'T PRACTICAL. I WANTED TO KEEP THE COSTUME AS PRACTICAL AS POSSIBLE. I WENT WITH A LIGHTNING

Pencil sketch from the double-page feature.

"How I Draw the Flash," #169, May 1967.

"**MOVEMENT** -- THAT'S WHAT THE FLASH WAS ALL ABOUT. THAT'S WHAT MADE THE CHARACTER! HE WAS TOUGH TO DO BECAUSE OF THE **CONSTANT SPEED!** EVERY PAGE, TO HAVE **CONSTANT MOTION!** EVEN WHEN IT WAS QUIET, YOU'D NEED **MOTION!**"

"AND IT HAD TO BE TO THE POINT OF BEING EASY TO READ!"

"WE WERE -- HAD A SINGLE FIGURE WITH THESE LINES, THEIR TUNE! PRACTICE FIGURE!"

"BECAUSE I WANTED TO GET SOMEONE TO JUST ONE SORT OF MOTION!"

"THIS PANEL CAME FROM WATCHING THE OLD CHRYSLER CARS."

"MANY YEARS AGO, THEY MADE A **SHAPE** LIKE A WING, AND THEY FELT IT GAVE **MOTION** TO THEIR CAR DESIGNS. IT **DIDN'T** SELL, BUT I SAW IT AND SAID, 'BUT IT **WORKS!**' AND I **USED** IT!"



1966, Mar. 1960.



1967, May 1967.

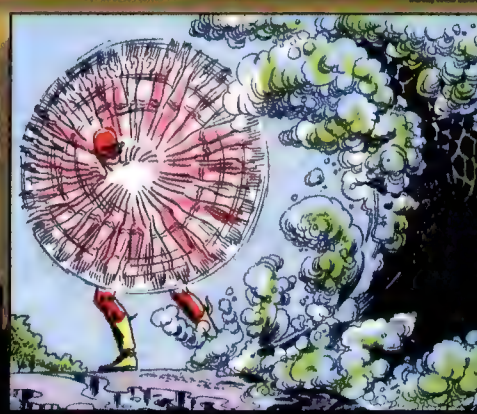


1968, Feb. 1968.



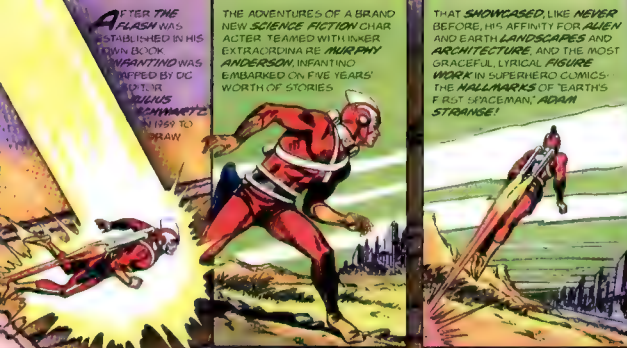
"THE FLASH WAS NOT BUILT LIKE A SUPERHERO, IF YOU LOOK AT HIM CAREFULLY, HE'S NOT BUILT LIKE BATMAN."

HE'S A RUNNER AND RUNNER -- DON'T HAVE THOSE KINDS OF MUSCLES. THEY'RE VERY LEAN!"



1968, Jan. 1968.





AFTER THE FLASH WAS ESTABLISHED IN HIS OWN BOOK, ADAM STRANGE WAS HIRED BY DC EDITOR JULIUS SCHWARTZ IN 1959 TO DRAW

THE ADVENTURES OF A BRAND NEW SCIENCE FICTION CHARACTER, TEAMED WITH INNER EXTRACRIMINAL MURPHY ANDERSON, IN THE NO. 1 EMBARKED ON FIVE YEARS' WORTH OF STORIES.

WHAT SHOWCASED, LIKE NEVER BEFORE, HIS AFFINITY FOR ALIEN AND EARTH LANDSCAPES AND ARCHITECTURE AND THE MOST SPACIOUS, LITRICAL, FIGURE WORK IN SUPERHERO COMICS: THE HALLMARKS OF 'EARTH'S FIRST SPACEMAN,' ADAM STRANGE!

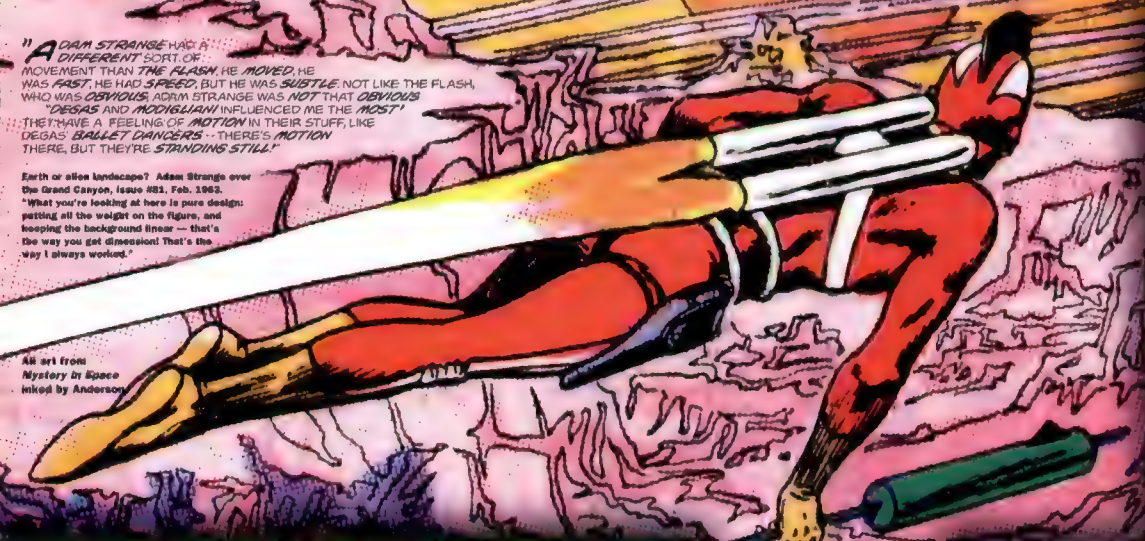
"IT'S INTERESTING DICHOTOMY IN ADAM STRANGE IS YOU FIRST SEE HIM ON EARTH, AND THEN YOU SEE HIM IN SPACE. TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS IF YOU CAN'T GET THAT DIFFERENCE YOU LOSE IT!"



"ADAM STRANGE HAD A DIFFERENT SORT OF MOVEMENT THAN THE FLASH. HE MOVED, HE WAS FAST, HE HAD SPEED, BUT HE WAS SUBTLE. NOT LIKE THE FLASH, WHO WAS OBVIOUS, ADAM STRANGE WAS NOT THAT OBVIOUS. 'DEGAS' AND 'MODIGLIANI' INFLUENCED ME THE MOST! THEY HAVE A FEELING OF MOTION IN THEIR STUFF, LIKE DEGAS' BALLET DANCERS - THERE'S MOTION THERE, BUT THEY'RE STANDING STILL."

Earth or alien landscape? Adam Strange over the Grand Canyon, issue #81, Feb. 1963. "What you're looking at here is pure design: putting all the weight on the figure, and keeping the background linear - that's the way you get dimension! That's the way I always worked."

All art from Mystery in Space inked by Anderson



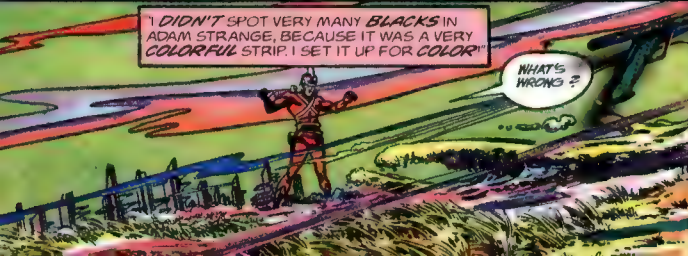
ONLY A MOMENT LEFT TO INVERT A COLLISION BETWEEN EARTH AND MY ADOPTED PLANET RANN!

ADAM STRANGE and HAWKMAN IN A DUAL ADVENTURE... "PLANETS IN PERIL!"

#90, Mar. 1964. "It was a simple idea, but it sure did have an effect on people." The original art is valued today at more than \$10,000.

"I DIDN'T SPOT VERY MANY BLACKS IN ADAM STRANGE, BECAUSE IT WAS A VERY COLORFUL STRIP, I SET IT UP FOR COLOR"

WHAT'S WRONG?



I--FAILED TO SAVE HER...

"THIS PANEL WAS INFLUENCED BY A CHINESE PAINTER NAMED CHEN CHI. HE'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WATERCOLOR ARTIST; I STUDIED HIM LIKE MAD! HE WOULD DO ONE SMALL FIGURE, AND THE REST OF THE PAINTING WOULD BE NOTHING BUT A BRICK WALL!"



All art from Mystery in Space inked by Anderson. Upper left: Truylch from #81, May 1964. Upper right two panels: #82, Mar. 1963. Lower left panel: #83, May 1963. Lower right panel: #79, Nov. 1962.





Detail from the splash page of a Space Museum story from *Strange Adventures* #133, Oct. 1961. "The Space Museums were interesting because they were stand-alone; I could experiment a lot more!"

**INFRANTINO** RARELY INKED HIS OWN PENCILS DURING THE SILVER AGE, BUT WHEN HE DID, MISCELLANEOUS WESTERNS (RIGHT) AND SCIENCE FICTION STORIES (BELOW), HE'D BRING OUT DIMENSIONS OF HIS ARTISTRY THAT HAD NATURALLY BEEN SUBSUMED BY HIS INKERS: A LIVELY, LOOSE PEN LINE, STRONG SPOTTING OF BLACKS, AND A STUDIED FOCUS ON RICHLY RENDERED LANDSCAPES THAT ELEVATED HIS BACK-

GROUND TO THE FORE? "THERE WAS A LOOK IN THOSE DAYS; DC LIKED THE VERY CLEAN, SLEEK, SHARP LOOK, THAT SHINY LOOK OF JOE GIELLA. MY STUFF LOOKED LIKE MY PENCILING, VERY SCRATCHY. MY INKING WAS NOT THE VOGUE OF THE DAY. IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS WHEN YOU SEE IT. IT'S SO CONTRADICTORY TO EVERYTHING ELSE THAT WAS THERE."

"I WAS ABLE TO BE LOOSER WITH MY INKS BECAUSE I PENCILLED LOOSER, KNOWING I WAS GOING TO INK IT. I DID MOST OF THE DRAWING IN THE INKING!"



From "The Invasion of the Indian Starlin," *Air-Star Western* #118, May 1961, a Super-Chief adventure.



"I FELT LIKE I WASN'T TAKING MY STUFF SERIOUSLY, BUT IT WORKS BECAUSE IT'S PURE DESIGN! I FELT YOU COULD MAKE SOMETHING REAL AND STILL DRAW IT UNREAL, AND IT WORKED. I DIDN'T WANT TO DRAW AN ANTOGRAPHICALLY. THIS HAD A DISTINCTION ABOUT IT, YOU COULDN'T GET WITH A PHOTO."

**NEAL ADAMS** ON INFRANTINO'S INKING: "HE A YOUNG, STRUGGLING ARTIST, I CHENISHED INFRANTINO INKED BY INFRANTINO SKRITCH, SKRITCH, SKRITCH, A SKETCH LINE, NOT THE THIN-THICK-THIN CONTOUR LINE, NOT THE BLACK WITH FEATHERED EDGES TO SHOW A COMIC BOOK SHADOW. NOTHING ABOUT IT WAS COMIC BOOK -- IT WAS A COMIC BOOK FINE BUT NOT A COMIC BOOK PAGE, IT WAS ART."



# There is Your FORMULA for a NEW THRILL in Comic Book Reading!

SCIENCE-FICTION *plus* SPORTS STORIES equals **STRANGE SPORTS STORIES**

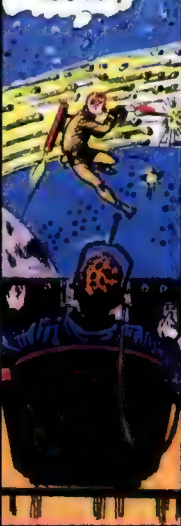
BUT STRANGELY ENOUGH, ARTHUR STACY IS NOT PARTICIPATING PERSONALLY IN THESE SPORTING ACTIVITIES! AS A MATTER OF FACT...



...HE IS IN TERRA CITY, SITTING IN HIS FAVORITE ARM-CHAIR... HIS PASSPORT TO SPORT! FOR THIS IS THE 30<sup>th</sup> CENTURY...

...AND SPORTS HAVE CHANGED DUE TO A MARVELOUS INVENTION MADE JUST A HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE BY A MAN NAMED KETVIN... AN INVENTION CALLED THE SPORTS-CASTER...

I'VE BLASTED A METEOROID WITH EVERY SHOT I'VE TAKEN--AND THAT SWARM IS SPEEDING THROUGH SPACE AT 30 MILES A SECOND!



IT WAS ASA KETVIN, THEN, WHO REALLY STARTED THE SO-CALLED "DOWNFALL" OF SPORTS...



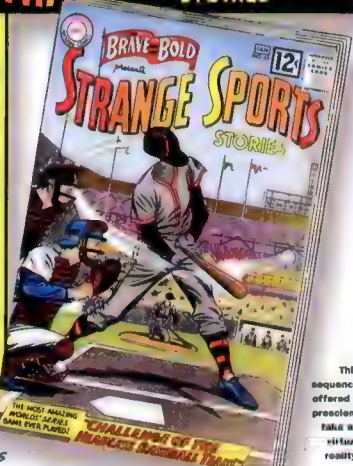
THANKS TO MY INVENTION, MANKIND WILL BEGIN A NEW ERA! WHATEVER SPORT A MAN WANTS TO INDULGE IN--HE WILL BE ABLE TO DO SO WITHOUT LEAVING HIS COMFORTABLE HOME!



THANKS TO A NEW TECHNIQUE IN COMIC BOOK ILLUSTRATION, YOU CAN FLIP THE PAGES OF THIS MAGAZINE AND SEE A BASEBALL GAME--A FOOTBALL GAME--PLAYED BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES!

AND WHAT A BASEBALL GAME--A "WORLDS" SERIES MATCH BETWEEN THE BASEBALL CHAMPIONS OF EARTH AND A HEADLESS BASEBALL TEAM FROM ANOTHER WORLD!

AND WHAT A FOOTBALL GAME--STARRING THE GREATEST PIGSKIN HERO OF ALL TIME--"GOLIATH OF THE GRIDIRON!"



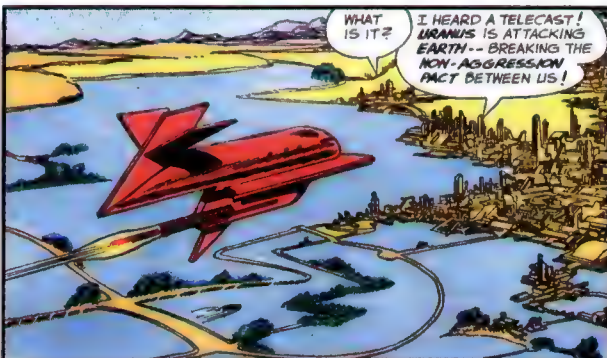
This sequence offered a present and virtual reality.

## 11 STRANGE SPORTS

BOOK I EVER DID? INFANTINO SAID, "IT WAS DIFFERENT. WHEN SCHWARTZ GAVE ME THIS BOOK TO DO, ALL HE SAID WAS, 'I WANT IT TO LOOK DIFFERENT.' LOOK DIFFERENT IT DID, PRIMARILY DUE TO INFANTINO'S BOLD

USE OF SILHOUETTED CAPTION BOXES, A FEATURE PLAYED UP BY DC IN THEIR HOUSE AD (ABOVE) FOR THE DEBUT ISSUE, **STRANGE & BOLD** #45, JAN. 1963, INKED BY MURPHY ANDERSON.

THE SCIENCE FICTION WAS ALL IMAGINATION. I WOULD TRY TO CREATE WHAT I THOUGHT THE STYLES OF THE FUTURE WOULD LOOK LIKE. I NEVER STROVE FOR REALITY. STORYTELLING AND DESIGN WERE PAR-MOUNT WITH ME.



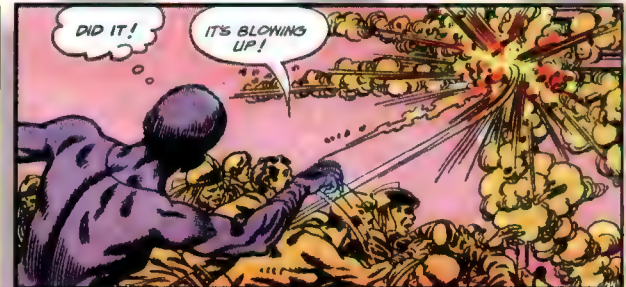
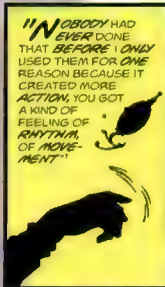
INFANTINO HAD BEEN EXPERIMENTING WITH CAPTION BOXES FOR YEARS PRIOR TO **STRANGE SPORTS**. 'D ALWAYS FOUND CAPTIONS VERY DULL, SO I THOUGHT I'D BREAK THEM INTO SMALLER PARA-



GRAPHS AND USE HANDS TO MAKE YOU READ THEM. AND I THINK YOU DID! THE SILHOUETTES USED IN **STRANGE SPORTS** STORIES WERE INNOVATIONS SILHOUETTES AS A DRAMATIC DEVICE



THE ACTION STARTS IN THE SILHOUETTE, AND THEN YOU GO TO THE CONVENTIONAL PANEL, AND THE ACTION FOLLOWS THROUGH ONE MIGHT ALMOST CALL IT AN ANIMATED TREATMENT!



All art from "Saga of the Secret Sportsmen," **Brave & Bold** #47, May 1963, written by Gardner Fox, inked by Anderson.





Detective #343, Sep. 1966, inked by Joe Giella

WHEN A DECADE-LONG DECLINE IN SALES OF THEIR FRANCHISE CHARACTER LED DC'S PUBLISHER IRWIN DONENFELD TO OFFER INFANTINO THE JOB TO DRAW BATMAN IN 1964, IT WAS BECAUSE, ACCORDING TO THE ARTIST, "DC WAS GOING TO CANCEL BATMAN! DONENFELD SAID TO US, 'I'M GONNA GIVE YOU GUYS A SHOT, AND IF IT DOESN'T WORK, IT'S ALL OVER.'"



Detective #343

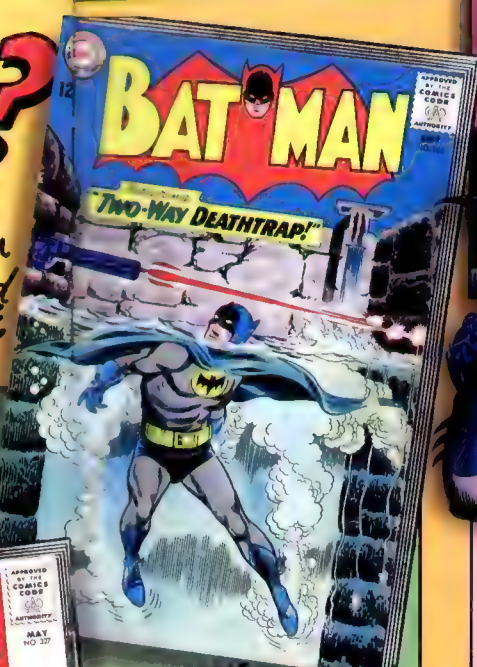
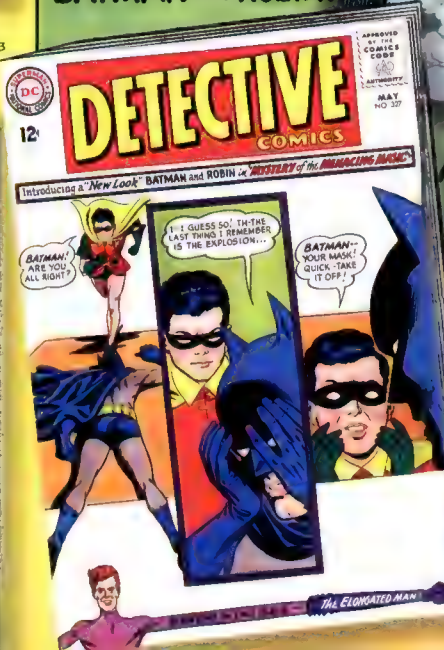
# What's NEW?

The "NEW LOOK" in  
**BATMAN and  
DETECTIVE  
COMICS!**

**STORIES...**

INITIATING A THRILLING SERIES  
OF POWER-PACKED ADVENTURES  
STARRING THE WORLD'S GREATEST  
DETECTIVE TEAM...

**BATMAN and ROBIN!**

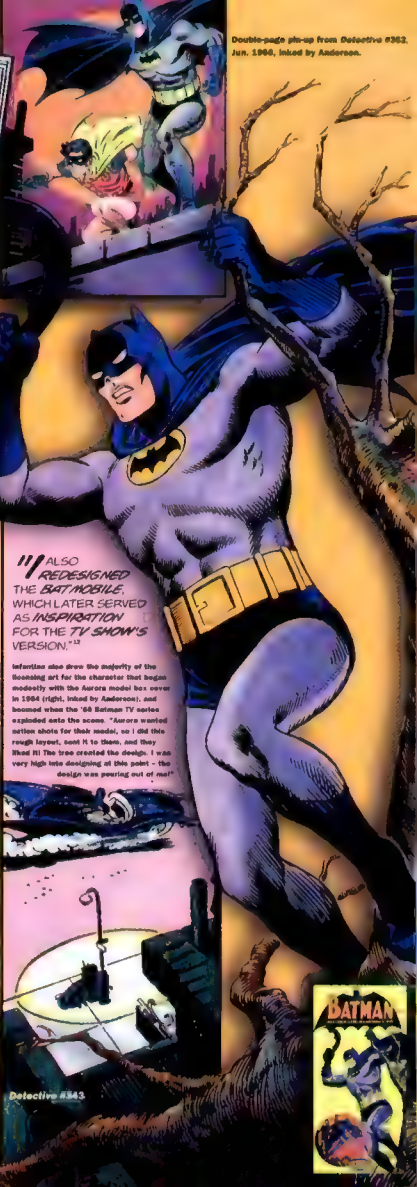


**ARTWORK...**

ILLUSTRATIONS MORE VIVID,  
COLORFUL, REALISTIC!  
THAN EVER BEFORE!

What was also new about "The New Look" was, for the first time in comic book history, the quality of the artwork was emphasized as a selling point, as shown in this altered version of DC's house of featuring two of the earliest Infantino Batman covers, Detective Comics #343, May 1964, and Batman #168, Sep. 1964, both inked by Giella.

"WITH JULIE SCHWARTZ AS EDITOR, I STARTED ON BATMAN. JULIE SAID, 'YOU BETTER COME UP WITH SOME COVER IDEAS. WE NEED SOMETHING DIFFERENT' SO THE FIRST ONE (LEFT) WAS DIFFERENT, WITH A THREE-PANEL LAYOUT, AND PEOPLE LIKED IT." JULIE SUGGESTED I MAKE SOME CHANGES TO BATMAN'S COSTUME AS PART OF OUR CHARACTER UPDATE. THIS INCLUDED CHANGES TO THE EARS AND THE NOSE OF BATMAN'S COWL, AS WELL AS ADDING THE YELLOW CIRCLE AROUND THE INSIGNIA ON BATMAN'S CHEST. WE DEVELOPED WHAT WAS CALLED 'THE NEW LOOK.'<sup>12</sup> AND THE NUMBERS STARTED TO MOVE UP. BATMAN WAS COMING BACK...<sup>13</sup>



Double-page pin-up from Detective #353, Jan. 1966, inked by Anderson.

"I ALSO REDESIGNED THE BATMOBILE, WHICH LATER SERVED AS INSPIRATION FOR THE TV SHOW'S VERSION."<sup>12</sup>

Infantino also drew the majority of the bookend art for the character that began modestly with the Karna model box set in 1964 (right, inked by Anderson), and bowed when the '68 Batman TV series exploded onto the scene. "I gave several action shots for their needs, so I did the rough layout, sent it to them, and they liked it! The team created the design. I was very high into designing at this point - the design was pouring out of me!"

Detective #345







Detective #327, May 1964.

**A**LTHOUGH HE FIRST APPEARED AS A SUP-PORTING CHARACTER IN THE PAGES OF *THE FLASH* (#112, MAY 1960), *THE ELONGATED MAN* PROVED POPULAR ENOUGH TO BE AWARDED HIS OWN BACKUP FEATURE WHEN SCHWARTZ AND CO. TOOK OVER *DETECTIVE COMICS* FOR THE FIRST FOUR ISSUES (AND ONLY A HANDFUL MORE A FEW YEARS LATER). INFANTINO NOT ONLY PEN-CILED THE FEATURE, BUT INKED IT AS WELL.



"IT HERE'S MORE SPOTTING OF BLACKS IN THE STUFF I INKED BECAUSE FEAT-URES LIKE *THE FLASH* AND *ADAM STRANGE* DIDN'T CALL FOR BLACKS."

"EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE I'D SAY, 'JULIE, I'M TIRED OF JUST PENCILING. I WANT TO DO SOMETHING ELSE.' HE SAID, WELL, WE WON'T GIVE YOU ANY MAIN FEAT-URES TO DO, SO PLAY WITH *THE ELONGATED MAN* IF YOU WANT!"

Detective #328, Jun. 1964.



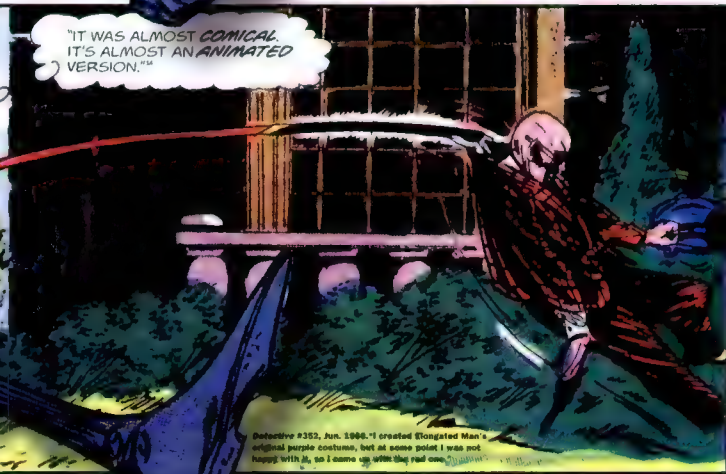
Detective #355, Sep. 1966.



Center figure, Detective #327.

"I ENJOYED THE ELONGATED MAN BECAUSE THE MATERIAL HAD A SENSE OF HUMOR!"

"IT WAS ALMOST COMICAL. IT'S ALMOST AN ANIMATED VERSION."



Detective #353, Jun. 1966. "I created Elongated Man's original purple costume, but at some point I was not happy with it, so I came up with the red one."





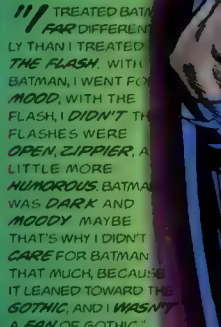
Detective #318, Feb. 1964.



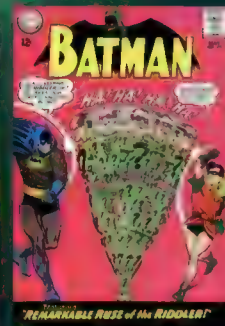
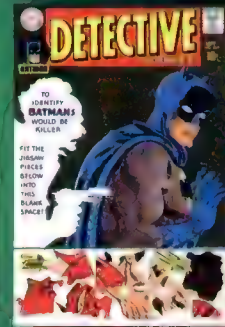
Batman #189, Feb. 1967.



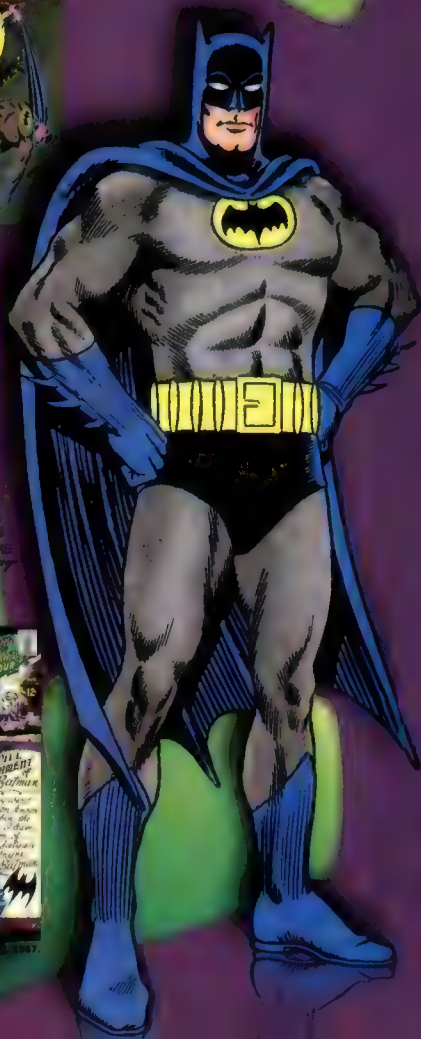
Detective #319, Feb. 1967.



Detective #320, Jun. 1968.



Double-page spread, Batman #191, Jun. 1968.



"I WAS AIMING FOR VERY DIFFERENT COVERS FOR BATMAN -- I TOOK STANDARD THINGS, LIKE THE JOKER'S HEAD (THE HOUSE THE JOKER BUILT WAS MY FAVORITE COVER), AND PUSHED THE LIMITS."

"ON COVERS, I FELT THAT IF YOU IRRITATE THE EYE, YOU DRAW THEM [THE READERS, IN, AND PERHAPS, (THEY'LL) BUY THE COMIC, AS COMICS ARE AN IMPULSE BUY ONE WAY TO IRRITATE THE EYE IS BY CREATING NEGATIVE SPACE WITH SHAPES YOU CAN PUT THINGS OFF-ANGLE OR YOU CAN PUT A LARGE OBJECT IN WITH A TINY OBJECT, AND THAT WOULD FORCE THE EYE TO LOOK AND IT WOULD OFFEND IT, IT IRRITATES A BIT BUT IT TAKES YOU IN. ONCE YOU GET THE PERSON IN, YOU HOLD THEM."

"THAT'S IT'S THE ARTIST'S JOB. MY COMPOSITION, MY MOVING THE PICTURE AROUND, AND MY MOVING THE CAMERA AROUND TO HOLD THEM."



Detective #322, Jun. 1968.

"It was done for licensing originally, then they used it for a glossary."





"An example of this on a Batman cover was breaking the lettering of the word 'Batman' into millions of pieces as he was coming down." When Donenfeld saw this cover (Batman #184, Aug. 1967), he had a fit! He was worried about what the distributors were going to say: in these days, they used to rip the logos off the tops of covers and send 'em back for credit. He said, 'I don't see the logo on top!' I said, 'You don't have to - you've got Batman on there!'"



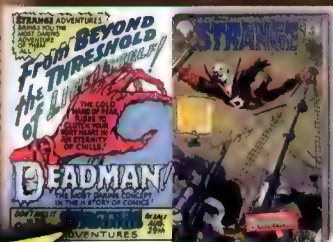
"Then there was the 'Flash' cover (1874, Nov. 1967) where I took the lettering and made it very long with all the villains and across the top, and The Flash lying on the bottom as if he were dead." When the distributors saw these two covers, they didn't want to put these books out - but I stuck to my guns, and they went with them. They had about 80% sales on these two books. These are examples of shockers. They got you, and you remembered them."



**T**HE DEBUT OF DEADMAN, INFANTINO'S FINAL SILVER AGE LEGACY, ONE OF THE LAST STORIES HE ILLUSTRATED BEFORE BECOMING AN EXECUTIVE AT DC COMICS. "I REMEMBER THE OPENING SHOT WHERE HE DIES. THAT COVER WAS (DC WRITER/CREATOR) ARNOLD DRAKE'S IDEA WHERE IT SAYS, 'THIS MAN HAS JUST BEEN KILLED AND HIS STORY IS JUST BEGINNING.' HE THREW IT AT ME AND I DID IT. AND IT WORKED. IT'S VERY GOOD. THAT COVER, REALLY INTERESTING. DEADMAN WAS A GOOD CHARACTER."<sup>10</sup>



**I** DRAKE  
HAD  
DRAWN A SKETCH  
(RIGHT) WITH A  
FACE SKULL  
LIKE BUT I  
SAID IT WAS  
NOT GOOD  
BECAUSE  
WEREN'T  
GOING TO  
RELATE TO A  
SKULL BUT I  
GAVE HIM AN EYE  
OF A MASK AND  
HE COULD SHOW  
EMOTION. I  
COULD NOT  
EXPLAIN THE  
OTHER WAY.



DC house ad, 1967.

Background: Details from cover of *Strange Adventures* #206, Oct. 1967, and interior panel (right) linked by George Rossano. "Deadman broke all the superhero rules," said writer Drake. "It said, 'Enough of that already, let's get into what's real, and honest.' It was today, Eastern philosophies, and so on. I was vetoing, and I was hearing."

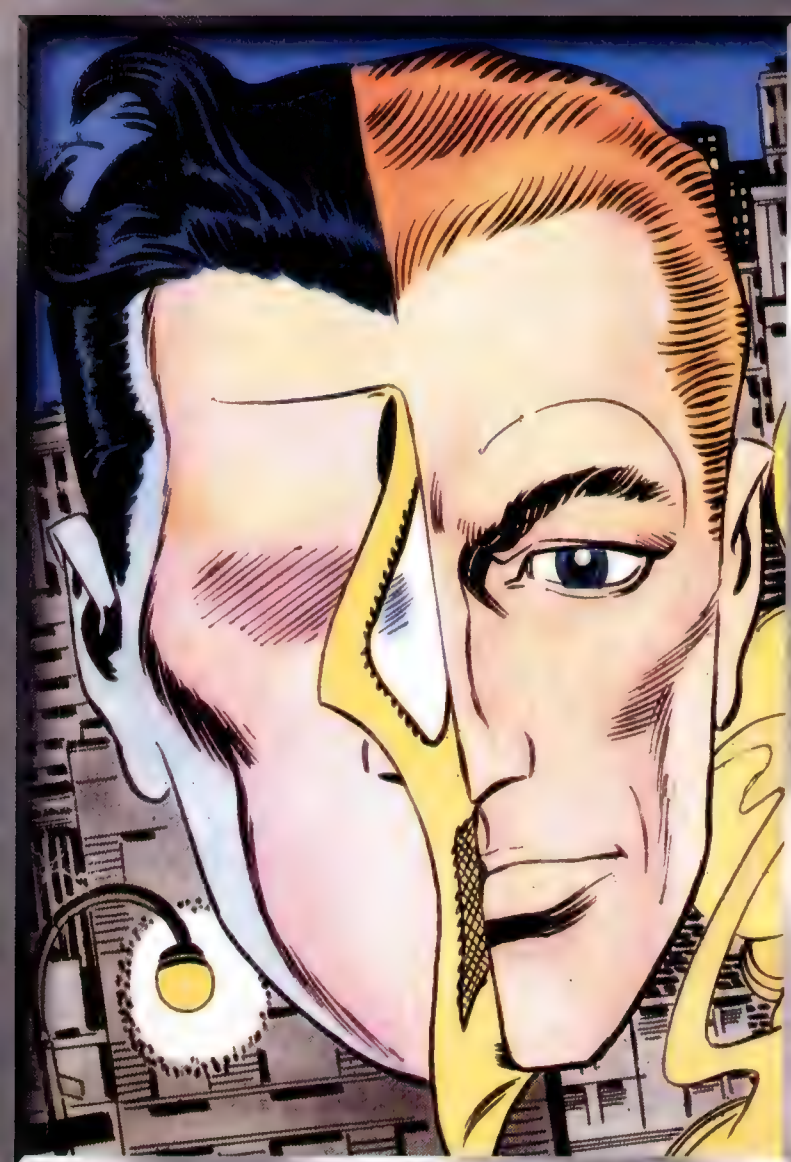
"CIRCUS PEOPLE ARE LIKE CHILDREN--SICK, DANGEROUS CHILDREN! RUNNING IT IS LIKE CONDUCTING A KINDERGARTEN--WHERE EVERY KID'S GOT A MACHINE GUN IN HIS DESK!"

"STOP IT, BOSTON! I CAN'T STAND IT WHEN YOU TALK--AND LOOK--THAT WAY! THAT COSTUME AND MAKEUP--"

"GET USED TO IT! THIS IS ME--PROFESSIONAL FINK AND BRILLIANT TRAPEZE ARTIST--**DEADMAN!**"







# Steve Ditko

PRIOR TO HIS CO-CREATION OF *SPIDER-MAN* WITH MARVEL COMICS' WRITER/EDITOR STAN LEE IN 1962, STEVE DITKO'S ARTISTIC MIQUEL MIRRORRED THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL, UGLINESS AND BEAUTY, AGE AND YOUTH, THE WEAK VERSUS THE STRONG. THUS, HIS GROUNDBREAKING DEPICTION OF *SPIDER-MAN* WENT AGAINST TYPE BY PORTRAYING THE *EVERYMAN*, THE *CONER*, THE *UNDERDOG* -- I.E. THE *TEENASER* -- AS SUPERHERO, AND HENCE SUPER-ANTHERO, THE SILVER AGE'S MOST POPULAR, YET, SOMEWHAT PARADOXICALLY, DITKO MADE *SPIDER-MAN* A TOUR-DE-FORCE OF THE SUPERHERO GENRE ITSELF, FEATURING CREATIVELY CHOREOGRAPHED FIGHT SCENES AND ACROBATIC DERRING-DO THAT TOOK FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE TRAITS INHERENT IN THE HERO'S ARACHNID NAMESAKE.

WITH HIS CREATION OF THE SUPER-SORCERER *DR. STRANGE*, DITKO EXPLORED THE DARKER WORLDS OF MYSTICISM AND THE OCCULT TO A GENERATION WEARIED ON AMERICAN POP CULTURE'S MORE MUNDANE DEPICTIONS OF REALITY. A STEP INTO THE PAGES OF *DR. STRANGE* IN 1963 PROVED TO BE A SURREALISTIC JOURNEY THROUGH THE WONDROUS WORLDS OF DITKO'S ARTISTIC IMAGINATION IN WHICH FORM WAS GIVEN TO BIZARRE DIMENSIONS AND ALTERNATE REALITIES THAT CAN BE SEEN AS PRECURSORS TO THE PSYCHEDELIA OF THE LATER 1960S.

AFTER DITKO LEFT MARVEL IN 1968 HE CREATED *THE CREEPER* AND *THE HAWK* AND THE *DOVEFOR DO COMICS* -- THAT, IF NOT ON THE SAME LEVEL OF POPULARITY AS HIS PREVIOUS MARVEL HEROES, HAVE NEVERTHELESS ENDURED TO ENTERTAIN NEW GENERATIONS, AS HAVE HIS ICONOCLASTIC, ENIGMATIC "TWIN" HEROES, *MR. A* AND *THE QUESTION*, WHO REMAIN AS CONTROVERSIAL IN CONCEPT TODAY AS THEY WERE WHEN DITKO FIRST CREATED THEM.

THE INFLUENCE AND UBIQUITY OF DITKO'S SILVER AGE WORK STAND IN STARK CONTRAST TO DITKO'S PERSONAL WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PUBLIC EVENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND INTERVIEWS BEFITTING A CREATOR OF HIS STATURE. "I'M A CARTOONIST IN THE COMIC BOOK BUSINESS," DITKO SAID IN 1988. "NOT A PERFORMER OR PERSONALITY IN SHOW BUSINESS. THEN I DO A JOB, IT'S NOT MY PERSONALITY THAT I'M OFFERING THE READERS, BUT MY ART WORK. IT'S NOT WHAT I MAKE THAT COUNTS, BUT WHAT I DID AND HOW WELL IT WAS DONE. I PRODUCE A PRODUCT, A COMIC ART STORY. STEVE DITKO'S THE BRAND NAME."



# Amazing ADULT Fantasy

WAS AN *ATLAS* (SEE *TIMELY*, LATER *MARVEL*) COMICS ANTHOLOGY TITLE (1960-62) OF BRIEF *SCIENCE FICTION/HORROR/FANTASY* STORIES WRITTEN BY *LEE* AND ILLUSTRATED BY *DITKO* THAT WAS SUBTITLED *"THE MAGAZINE THAT RESPECTS YOUR INTELLIGENCE"* BECAUSE ITS "FANTASTIC THRILLERS," AS THE COVER BLURBS READ, WERE "FOR THE MORE MATURE READER."

Above: Everett Ruess, *The Twilight Zone*, 1959.

Below: Richard Coates, *The Twilight Zone*, 1959.



THIS READ LIKE COMIC BOOK VERSION OF ROO-TERLING'S TELEVISION CLASSIC, *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* (CBS-TV, 1959-64), BECAUSE THEY WERE SIMILARLY POPULATED WITH *AVERAGE, ORDINARY* PEOPLE WHO FOUND THEMSELVES IN *EXTRAORDINARY* SITUATIONS THAT WOULD RESOLVE IN SURPRISE, *TWIST* ENDINGS. EVEN *DITKO'S VISUAL* CHARACTERIZATIONS PERFECTLY ENDED THEIR VIDEO COUNTERPARTS.

## THE MAN WHO CAPTURED DEATH!

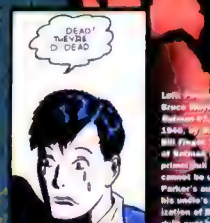


Source: Amazing Adult Fantasy #9, Feb. 1962.



More of Captain Atom's adventures!  
A VICTORY FOR VENUS!

Source: Charlton Comics, *Space Adventures* #11, Dec. 1960, featuring Bill's Captain Atom — and just the first appearance of the Silver Age — and he looks like a little more like a superhero in Lee's time.



Background image, clockwise from lower left: Journey Into Mystery #96, Sep. 1963; Amazing Adult Fantasy #7, Dec. 1961; Strange Tales #115, Dec. 1963; Amazing Fantasy #15, Aug. 1962.

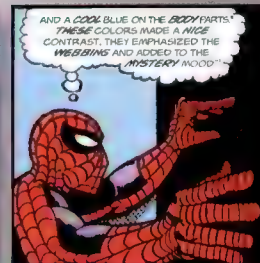


"STEVE'S STYLE WAS ALMOST COMICALLY DIFFERENT FROM JACK'S. STEVE WOULD EXAGGERATE, STEVE WOULD STRIVE ZEALOUSLY FOR TOTAL REALISM, WHERE JACK MADE HIS CHARACTERS AS HEROIDICALLY HANDSOME AS POSSIBLE. STEVE'S FORTITUDE SEEMED TO BE DEFECTING THE AVERAGE MAN IN THE STREET. I DECIDED TO PLAY A MUNCH. I ASKED STEVE TO DRAW SPIDER-MAN AND THE PINK HISTORY."



ACCORDING TO DITKO, "NO ONE MIND AND HAND CREATED THE MARVEL-PUBLISHED SPIDER-MAN CREATION." STAN LEE THOUGHT THE NAME UP. I DID THE COSTUME, WEB GIMMICK ON WRIST, AND SPIDER-SIGNAL."

Right: Ditko's idea, the Marvel character logo box, first seen on Spider-Man #2, May 1963; in Issue #3, it ran on the letters column with the blurb, "Don't forget to look for one of the greatest trademarks in comics..."



Above: Amazing Fantasy #15, Aug. 1962.

Above: Spider-Man #1, Jan. 1963.

Above: Spider-Man #1.

"THE CREATION OF THE COSTUME IS A STORY IN ITSELF... I WASN'T SURE STAN WOULD LIKE THE IDEA OF COVERING THE CHARACTER'S FACE, BUT I DID IT BECAUSE IT HAD AN OBVIOUSLY BOYISH FACE. IT WOULD ALSO ADD MYSTERY TO THE CHARACTER AND ALLOW THE READER/VIEWER THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISUALIZE, TO 'DRAW,' HIS OWN PREFERRED EXPRESSION ON PARKER'S FACE AND, PERHAPS, BECOME THE PERSONALITY BEHIND THE MASK."



From "The Secrets of Spider-Man," Spider-Man Annual #1. In diagrammatically panels like these, Ditko graphically explained Spider-Man's abilities, gimmicks, and costume itself.

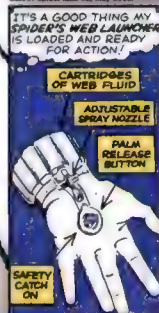
THE WHITE AREAS IN SPIDEY'S EYE CUT-OUTS ON HIS MASK ARE REALLY CLEVER PLASTIC LENSES OF THE TWO-WAY MIRROR TYPE! HE CAN SEE OUT VERY CLEARLY, BUT NO ONE CAN SEE IN! THEREFORE, HE CAN NEVER BE RECOGNIZED BY THE COLOR OF HIS EYES!

THESE INGENUOUS PLASTIC LENSES ALSO PROTECT HIS EYES FROM DUST, DIRT, AND THE GLARE OF THE SUN!

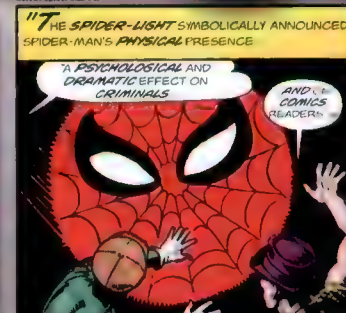


LEE SEEMED TO CONCUR, "I HAVE ALWAYS CONSIDERED STEVE DITKO TO BE SPIDER-MAN'S CO-CREATOR... FROM HIS VERY FIRST PANEL, STEVE CREATED AND ESTABLISHED THE PERFECT MOOD AND GESTALT FOR SPIDER-MAN. ALSO, IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT STEVE'S COSTUME DESIGN WAS AN ACTUAL MASTERPIECE OF IMAGINATION. THANKS TO STEVE DITKO, SPIDEY'S COSTUME HAS BECOME ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST RECOGNIZABLE VISUAL ICONS."

Source: Spider-Man #2, May 1963.



Source: Spider-Man #1.



Source: Flying Saucer Spider-Man Annual #1.





# WANTED

CAUTION:  
HE IS  
DANGER-  
OUS



REPORT  
HIM TO  
NEAREST  
F.B.I.  
OFFICE

## SPIDERMAN REWARD FOR HIS CAPTURE

FROM THE *START*, THE SPIDER-LIKE ASPECTS OF DITKO'S CONCEPTION WERE SO FULLY REALIZED THAT THEY MAKE SPIDER-MAN AS MUCH A VESTIGE OF THE MONSTERS FROM MARVEL'S PRE-HERO ERA AS A NEW SUPER-HERO--WHICH FRIGHTENED

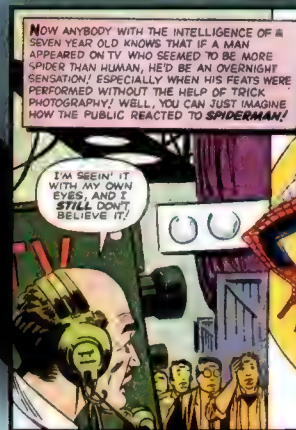
NOT ONLY THE FICTIONAL CITY FOLK BUT REAL COMIC BOOK FOLK. AS DITKO EXPLAINED, "THERE IS SOMETHING I DID THAT THREATENED SPIDER-MAN... STAN WANTED ME TO TAKE SPIDER-MAN OFF THE WIRE, CEILING... TO CHANGE THE SPIDER-LIKE POSES.

"STAN WAS AFRAID THE COMICS CODE 'JUDGES' MIGHT OR WOULD REJECT SPIDER-MAN BECAUSE PETER PARKER, THE TEENAGER, WOULD BE SEEN BY YOUNG BUYERS AS SOMETHING NON-HUMAN, A FREAK, A SPIDER-LIKE CREATURE. SEEING THE SPIDER-LIKE POSES WOULD BE BAD, CAUSING ALL KINDS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS..."

"DOES ANYONE CARE TO SPECULATE ON WHAT AN UN-SPIDER-LIKE CHARACTER SPIDER-MAN WOULD HAVE BEEN AND LOOKED LIKE IN ACTION?"



MARVEL AND DC WRITER STEVE ENGLEHART ASKED, "WHAT WOULD THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR SUPERHERO, SPIDER-MAN, BE WITHOUT DITKO?"





"THE THIRTY-NINE ISSUES AND TWO ANNUALS STEVE DREW HAD THE ESSENCE OF STRANGENESS, OF DARKNESS, THAT NOT EVEN THE MASSIVE SUCCESS AND CONSEQUENT LOSS OF A SINGLE GUIDING SPIRIT COULD OBLITERATE. SPIDEY IS SPIDEY AND NO ONE ELSE BECAUSE OF STEVE DITKO."

— Steve Englehart

STRANGENESS AND DARKNESS MEET IN DITKO'S SPIDER-SENSE DESIGN

"AT SOME POINT," DITKO SAID,

"I TOOK A PENCIL AND DREW *SQUIGGLY* LINES RADIATING FROM SPIDER-MAN'S HEAD AND SAID (TO STAN), SPIDER-MAN HAS 'SPIDER SENSES,' THE WAY *BATS* CAN DETECT, SENSE INSECTS, OBJECTS AT NIGHT."

"BY USING A *SPLIT-FACE* WHEN (PETER) PARKER MADE OR HEARD ANY REFERENCE TO SPIDER-MAN, I COULD SHOW SPIDER-MAN IN A *SYMBOLIC* PRESENCE IN *ORDINARY* SITUATIONS...WHERE SPIDER-MAN *COULDN'T* BE IN *COSTUME / ACTION*."

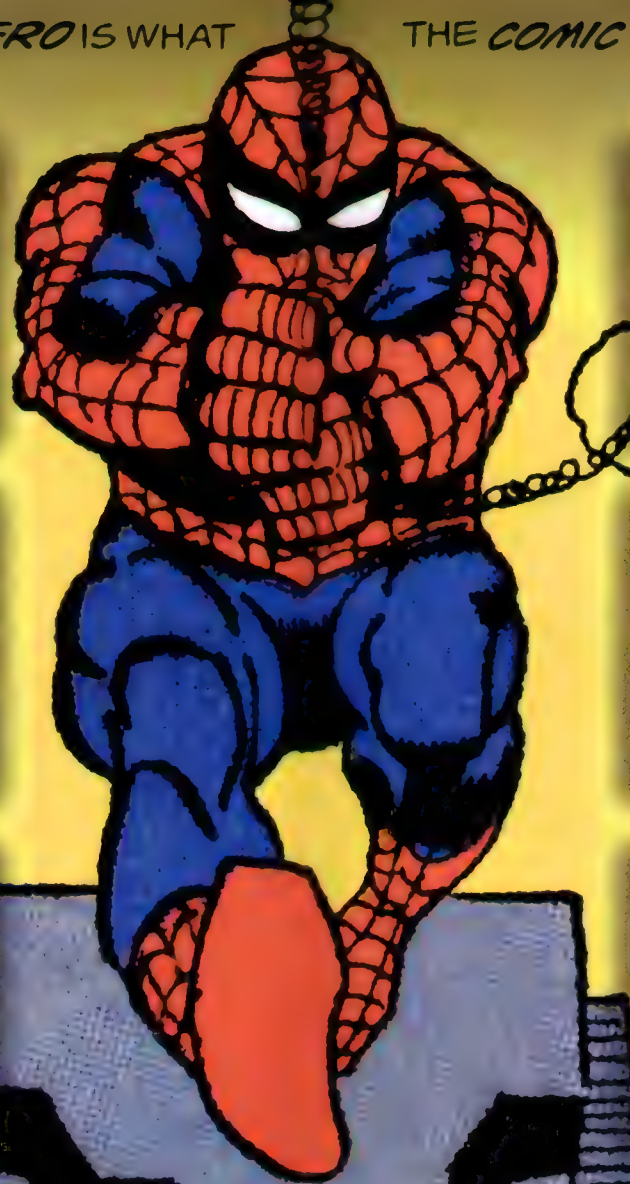


Background and cover photos: Spider-Man #66, Sep. 1966. Right page top to bottom: Spider-Man #6, May 1963. Spider-Man #6, Sep. 1963. Spider-Man #66, Apr. 1966.



"THE COSTUMED HERO IS WHAT

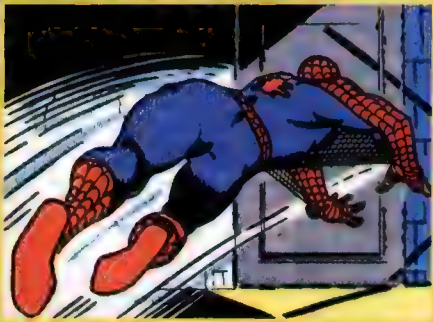
THE COMIC BOOK IS ALL ABOUT...



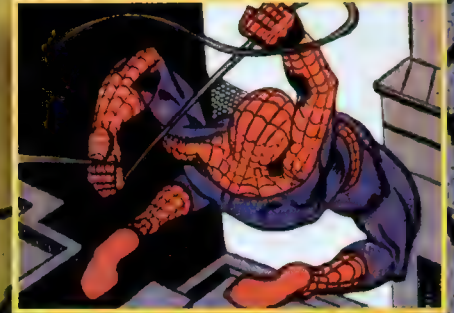
Spider-Man Annual #3, 1993



Spider-Man #26, Jul. 1993



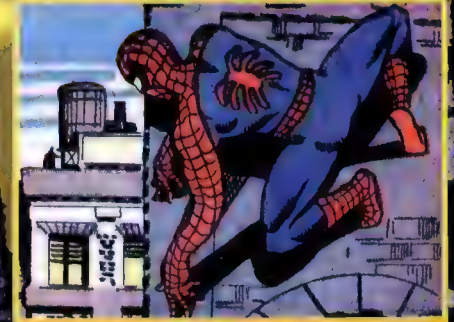
Spider-Man #35, Mar. 1994



Spider-Man #26, Jul. 1993



Spider-Man #26, Jul. 1993



Above: Spider-Man #19, Dec. 1992

Background: Spider-Man #19





Electro, from Spider-Man Annual #1, 1966.



The Green Goblin, from Spider-Man #23, Apr. 1965.



Mysterio, from Spider-Man Annual #1.

...A COSTUMED HERO IN ACTION."  
-Steve Ditko



The Sandman, from Spider-Man Annual #1.



The Scorpion, from Spider-Man #28, Oct. 1966.



The Vulture, from Spider-Man Annual #1.

Inset: Spider-Man's regular gallery.  
Background: Ditko's logo design for the letter column "Spider's Web," Spider-Man #2, Jan. 1962.



# Dr. STRANGE

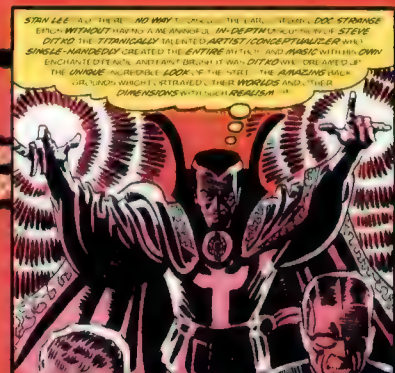
All Dr. Strange art appeared in *Strange Tales*. Below: Splash page detail from Dr. Strange's debut, issue #110, Jul. 1963, scripted by Lee. A month before, Lee's letter in issue #8 of the *Fantasy* The Comic Reader announced, "We have a new character... named Dr. Strange... 'twice Steve's idea.'"



Left and center panels above:  
From has-been to shaman: two  
panels from issue #118, Dec. 1963,  
"The Origin of Dr. Strange!"

Panel above: David Niven  
meets Ronald ("Lost Horizon")  
Coleman. The quest-Asian look Ditko  
gave Dr. Strange, from issue #117, Feb. 1964.

"Even a hero's or villain's cape can be more of a  
minus than a plus," Ditko said. "Dr. Strange's cape  
added mystery and was a flying device." "Back-ground  
and panel below: from issue #120, Feb. 1965.







The Greenwich Village verminholes of the Doctor's townhouse from issue #117, Feb. 1964, another factor in Marvel's freshness. "Marvel even had its horses living in New York City," Ditko said, "a real, factual, geographical location."<sup>20</sup>



Panel from the splash page of *The Spirit* by Will Eisner, Aug. 11, 1946. Was Ditko influenced by the window design of *The Spirit's* Wildwood Cemetery tale...



...or by Ken Adams' production design of a very different doctor's waiting room from the first of his many James Bond films, 1962's *Dr. No*?

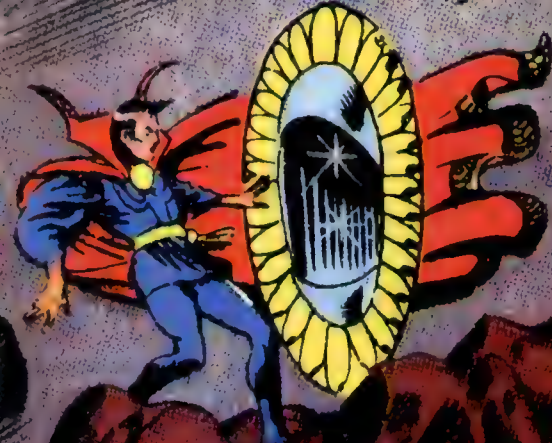
"A CREATION IS  
ACTUALLY A RE-CREATION,  
A REARRANGEMENT OF EXISTING  
MATERIALS IN A NEW, DIFFERENT, ORIGINAL,  
NOVEL WAY. IN COMICS, THE MATERIALS ARE FACTS,  
FICTION, AND FANTASY ELEMENTS."<sup>21</sup>

—Steve Ditko



Background: Inside the sanctum sanctorum of Dr. Strange (from issue #119, Apr. 1964), lit by that one-of-a-kind window!





"DITKO CREATED A CONCEPT OF  
MYSTICISM AND INTERDIMENSIONAL  
TRAVEL WHICH I HAVE NEVER SEEN  
BEFORE IN COMICS. IT WAS  
ABSOLUTELY *BELIEVABLE*."

—Gil Kane, 1969



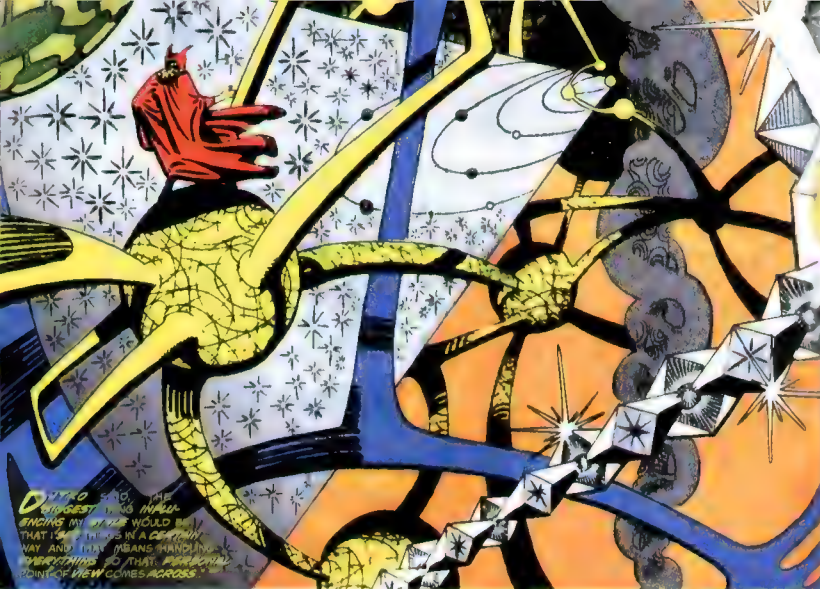
Background: *Strange Tales* #138, Nov. 1968.  
Insets: Before Dr. Strange, Ditko had long been  
playing with time and space portals, like in these  
two splash pages, from *Amazing Adult Fantasy*  
#11, Apr. 1962 (left), and *Journey into Mystery*  
#66, Sep. 1962 (right).



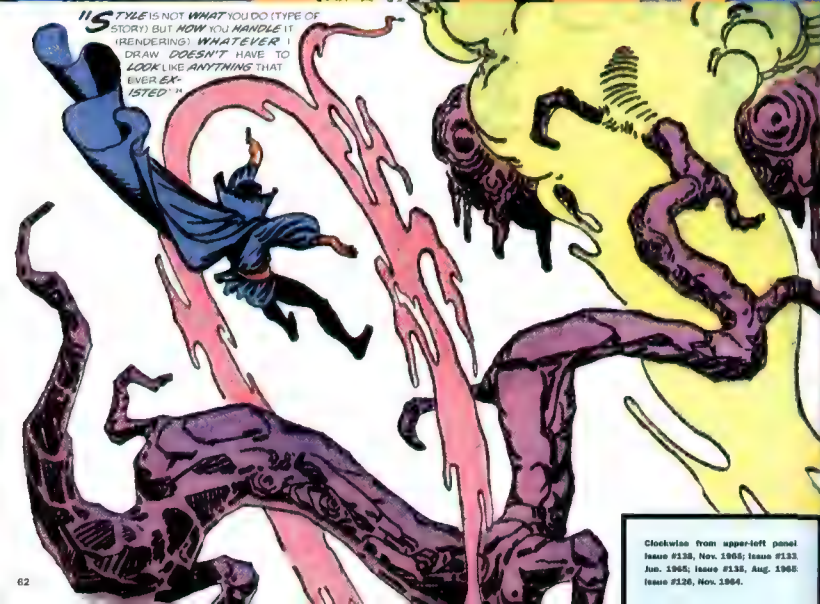
"HE SITS FOR HOURS ON END  
READING COMIC BOOKS,  
ABSORBED IN THE PLUNGING PURPLE  
STEVE DITKO SHADOWS  
OF DR. STRANGE."

—Tom Wolfe writing in  
*The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, 1968,  
of Merry Prankster Ken Kesey's reading habits  
while traveling on his Magic Bus  
spreading his LSD gospel across America in 1964.





"DITKO SAYS THE BIGGEST THING INTER- PRETS IN HIS OWN INDIVIDUAL WAY, HIS STYLE OR 'ORIGINALITY' IS JUST HIS INDIVIDUAL INTER- PRETATION IF YOU DRAW A SCENE THE WAY YOU PERSONALLY THINK IT SHOULD BE YOU WILL HAVE YOUR OWN 'INDIVIDUAL' STYLE AFTER ALL THERE'S REALLY NO ONE ELSE IN THE WORLD LIKE YOU."



"STYLE IS NOT WHAT YOU DO (TYPE OF STORY) BUT HOW YOU HANDLE IT (RENDERING). WHATEVER I DRAW DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE ANYTHING THAT EVER EX- ISTED."



"I HART, THE ARTIST INTER- PRETS IN HIS OWN INDIVIDUAL WAY, HIS STYLE OR 'ORIGINALITY' IS JUST HIS INDIVIDUAL INTER- PRETATION IF YOU DRAW A SCENE THE WAY YOU PERSONALLY THINK IT SHOULD BE YOU WILL HAVE YOUR OWN 'INDIVIDUAL' STYLE AFTER ALL THERE'S REALLY NO ONE ELSE IN THE WORLD LIKE YOU."

TO THE OR STRANGE ART WORLD THAT DITKO DEVELOPED FROM 1963 '66, ONE COULD APPLY THIS DESCRIPTION THAT VICTOR HUGO GAVE OF AN UNEARTHLY SPECTACLE.



"THE DARKNESS HAD MADE OF ALL THAT SHADOW, SUDDENLY, COME TO LIFE, CHRISTIAN, UNDER- HAND THAT COMES A RAGE, EVERYWHERE GOLD, SCARLET, BALLANCES OF RUBIES, A RUSTLING OF FLAMES ONE WOULD HAVE SAID THAT THE DARKNESS HAD SUDDENLY SET AMID TO THIS WORLD OF DARKNESS."

Clockwise from upper-left panel: Issue #138, Nov. 1968; Issue #133, Jun. 1968; Issue #134, Aug. 1968; Issue #136, Nov. 1968.



DITKO: "I KNOW WHY I LEFT MARVEL BUT NO ONE

ELSE IN THIS UNIVERSE KNEW OR KNOWS WHY..."

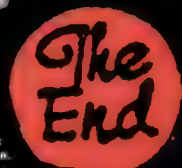


WHEN DITKO

LEFT MARVEL IN 1966, RUMORS CIRCULATED AS TO WHY. RUMORS STILL IN CIRCULATION TODAY -- BECAUSE DITKO HAS NEVER REVEALED WHY HE TURNED HIS BACK ON TWO OF THE GREATEST CHARACTERS IN THE HISTORY OF COMICS. BUT HIS ABRUPT DEPARTURE DID FOLLOW AN ARTICLE IN THE NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, IN WHICH STAN LEE SAID, "I DON'T PLOT SPIDER-MAN ANY MORE. STEVE DITKO, THE ARTIST, HAS BEEN DOING THE STORIES. I GUESS I'LL LEAVE HIM ALONE UNTIL SALES START TO SLIP. SINCE SPIDEY GOT SO POPULAR, DITKO THINKS HE'S THE GENIUS OF THE WORLD."

Above: The unenviable task of following Ditko as Spider-Man fell to artist John Romita. Ditko's unique stylization made the character one of the few in comic book history to be so intrinsically linked to its original artist, which played a large role in Spider-Man becoming, by the time Ditko left in 1966, the de facto mascot of Marvel itself. But Romita rose to the challenge, making his Spider-Man (represented by the cover of issue #50, Jul. 1967, one of the greatest in the history of comics) emerge from Ditko's shadow even more successful--and in a brief time, the boss role surpassed that of Marvel Comics.

Background: The last panel of Spider-Man #11, Apr. 1964. Next! The End, indeed! Strange Tales #148, Jul. 1968, Ditko's last Dr. Strange, and his only cover in the 38-issue run.

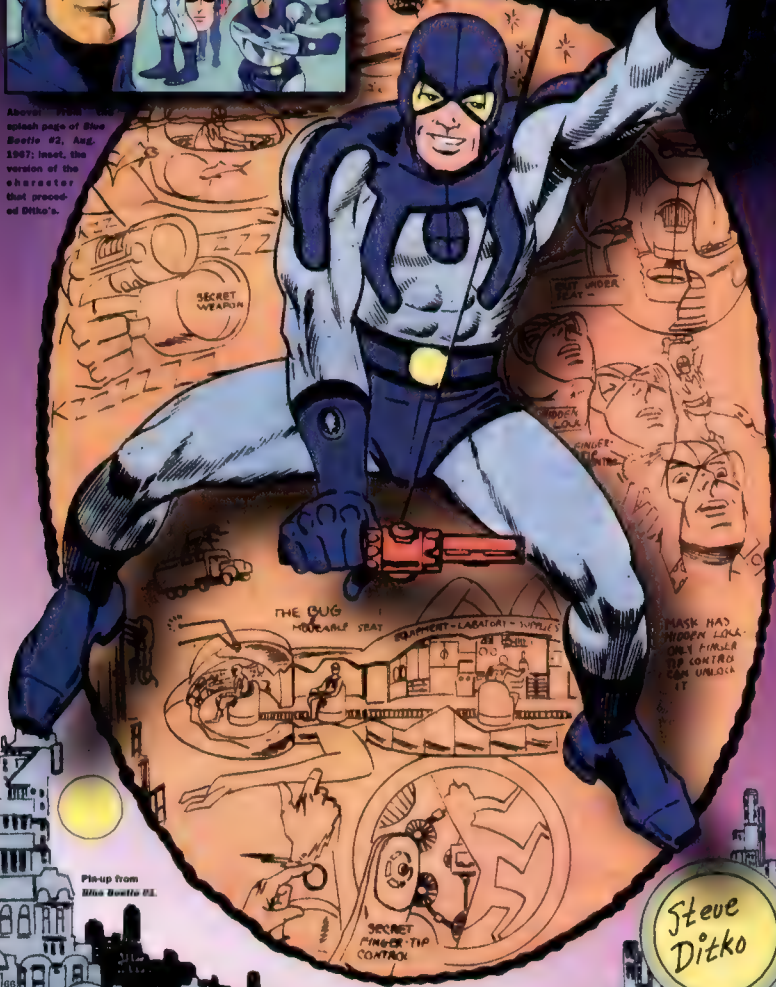






About 1968, the sketch page of Blue Beetle #2, Aug. 1967; inset, the version of the character that preceded Ditko's.

AFTER HAVING **MAKED** A SUPERHERO WHO **WAS** **ALREADY** **AROUND** **SINCE** **THE** **GOLDEN** **AGE**, **THE** **BLUE** **BEETLE** **FOR** **CHARLTON** **COMICS** **WAS** **LOOKING** **OVER** **THE** **FIRST** **BLUE** **BEETLE** **THAT** **CHARLTON** **PUT** **OUT** **AND** **IT** **WAS** **FANTASTIC**, **DITKO** **SAID** **HE** **BEGAN** **THINKING** **HOW** **IT** **COULD** **HAVE** **BEEN** **HANDLED** **THE** **WAYS** **HAD** **WERE** **GOOD**, **SO** **HE** **IMAGINED** **THEM** **DOWN**, **MADE** **SKETCHES** **OF** **THE** **COSTUME**, **CHARACTERS** **THE** **BUG**, **ETC.** **A** **YEAR** **OR** **SO** **LATER**, **WHEN** **CHARLTON** **WAS** **REALLY** **PLANNING** **TO** **DO** **SUPERHEROES**, **I** **TOLD** **(EDITOR)** **DICK** **GIORDANO** **ABOUT** **THE** **BLUE** **BEETLE**, **AND** **HE** **HAD** **HE** **WAS** **INTERESTED** **IN** **TRYING** **IT**, **SO** **IT** **CAME** **OUT** **OF** **THE** **FIRST** **FILE**.



Pis-up from Blue Beetle #2.

Steve Ditko

# THE CREEPER



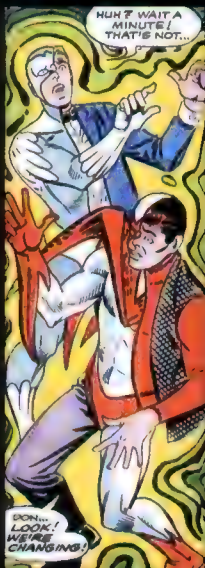
EVEN MORE, PERHAPS, THAN THE BLUE BEETLE, THE CREEPER, WHOM DITKO CREATED FOR DC COMICS IN 1968, WAS THE CLOSEST HE HAD COME TO RIDING THE LINE BETWEEN REPLICATING SPIDER-MAN AND CREATING AN ORIGINAL CHARACTER THOUGH NEVER MAKING IT PAST A HANDFUL OF ISSUES IN THEIR ORIGINAL SILVER AGE RUNS. BOTH SUPERHEROES LIVED ON IN CREATIVE HANDS OTHER THAN DITKO'S.

(Left) Like the best thin hero, you can almost feel the role on the cover of *Beware The Creeper* #1, Jan. 1968, a trail it shares with Ditko's previous creation, *Green-Glue* #23, Feb. 1968 (below).



Ditko





Three far-left panels from Hawk and Dove to The Hawk and The Dove: Three panels from Showcase #78, Jan. 1968, the origin of the duo, written by Ditko with Steve Skeates; they receive their super-power to transform from "a strange, disconnected voice... a voice that comes from everywhere—and nowhere at the same time..."

Center image: From the cover of Showcase #78.

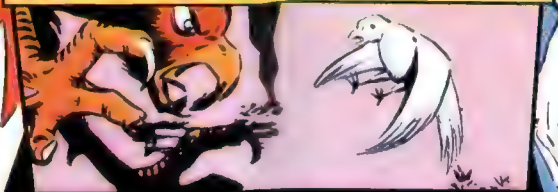
Center bedroom image, below right: The last panel of the Hawk and The Dove #1, Sep. 1968.



IN THIS WORLD, THOSE WHO SEEK JUSTICE OFTEN WALK DIFFERENT PATHS.  
**THE TOUGH AND THE TAME!**



**THE CHALLENGER AND THE CHALLENGED!**



GOOD NIGHT, BABY!  
BLEEDING HEART!  
SISSY!  
WEEPER!



GOOD NIGHT, SADIST!  
WITLESS BARBARIAN!  
BULLY!  
THUG!



LIKE THE CENTRAL ILLUSTRATION, A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN HAWK AND DOVE, THE CONCEPT FOR DITKO'S NEXT DC PROJECT AFTER THE CREEPER, THE HAWK AND THE DOVE, WAS TORN FROM THE HEADLINES OF 1968 AMERICA, WHERE PRO AND ANTI-VIETNAM WAR PROTESTORS WERE GRABING ON A DAILY BASIS. DITKO'S PERSONIFICATIONS WERE NOVEL, BUT AS WITH THE CREEPER, DITKO CHOSE TO MOVE ON AFTER A COUPLE OF ISSUES, NEVER TO RETURN TO THE SUPER-POWERED BROTHER TEAM, YET THE HAWK AND THE DOVE REMAIN FUNCTIONING INHABITANTS OF THE DC UNIVERSE.



Above: The Hawk and The Dove #1.



The Hawk and The Dove #2, Nov. 1968.



"HAD BEEN THINKING ABOUT A TYPE OF CHARACTER THAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT OR THAT WOULD BE A STEP AHEAD OF WHAT WAS BEING DONE EVER SINCE THE EARLY SPIDER-MAN DAYS," SAID DITKO. "THE KING I DECIDED ON WAS THE MR. A TYPE."  
 "MR. A IS BASED ON AYN RAND'S THEORY OF JUSTICE, ON ARISTOTLE'S LAW OF IDENTITY. A IS A THING IS WHAT IT IS."  
 "MR. A'S BLACK AND WHITE CARD SYMBOLIZES THE LAW OF IDENTITY. IT IDENTIFIES THE TWO POTENTIALS POSSIBLE: THE GOOD AND THE EVIL. THE CARD IS ALSO A SYMBOL OF JUSTICE. FOR AYN RAND, JUSTICE IS OBJECTIVELY IDENTIFYING A THING

FOR WHAT IT IS AND TREATING IT ACCORDINGLY. THE CARD IS A REFUSAL TO VIOLATE THE ROOT OF JUSTICE, THE LAW OF IDENTITY BY A GRAY COMPROMISE."

"WHEN BLUE BEETLE GOT HIS OWN MAGAZINE, THEY NEEDED A COMPANION FEATURE FOR IT. I DIDN'T WANT TO DO MR. A, BECAUSE I DIDN'T THINK THE [COMICS] CODE WOULD LET ME DO THE TYPE OF STORIES I WANTED TO DO, SO I WORKED UP THE QUESTION, USING THE BASIC IDEA OF A MAN WHO WAS NOTIFIED BY BASIC BLACK AND WHITE PRINCIPLES."

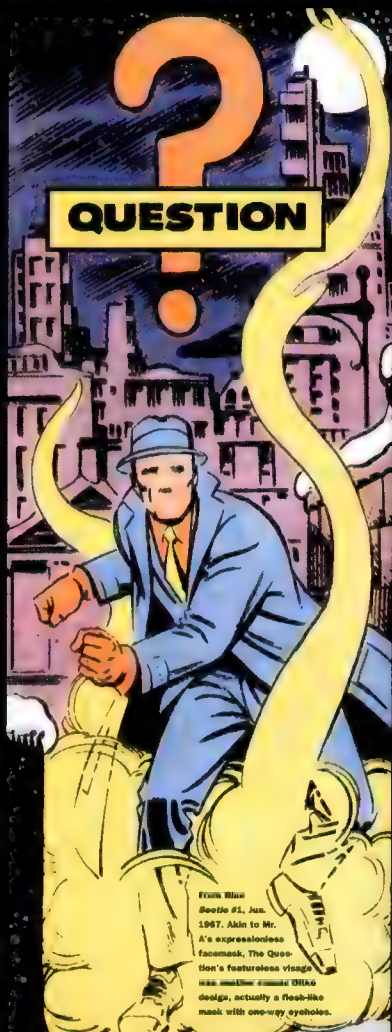
Detail from splash page of the first Mr. A story, *Witrend* #2, 1967, written by Ditko. When he debuted in *Witrend*, the first "prose," a magazine self-published by the legendary artist Wally Wood of E.C. Comics, Mad

*Magazine* and *Tower Comics* fame, Mr. A was the first Silver Age comic character created by a mainstream artist of Ditko's stature to be published outside—or underground—the mainstream.

FOOLS WILL TELL YOU THAT THERE CAN BE NO HONEST PERSON! THAT THERE ARE NO BLACKS OR WHITES.... THAT EVERYONE IS GRAY! BUT IF THERE ARE NO BLACKS OR WHITES THERE CANNOT EVEN BE A GRAY... SINCE GRAYNESS IS JUST A MIXTURE OF BLACK AND WHITE! SO WHEN ONE KNOWS WHAT IS BLACK, EVIL, AND WHAT IS WHITE, GOOD, THERE CAN BE NO JUSTIFICATION FOR CHOOSING ANY PART OF EVIL! THOSE WHO DO SO CHOOSE, ARE NOT GRAY, BUT BLACK AND EVIL...AND THEY WILL BE TREATED ACCORDINGLY!



## QUESTION



From *Blue Beetle* #1, Jan. 1967. As to Mr. A's expressionless face mask, *The Question*'s featureless visage was another unusual Dikto design, actually a flesh-like mask with one-way eyeholes.

SEEM TO TURN OUT RIGHT FOR ME? WHY DO I SEEM TO HURT PEOPLE, NO MATTER HOW I TRY NOT TO? IS THIS THE PRICE I MUST ALWAYS PAY FOR BEING... SPIDER-MAN??!

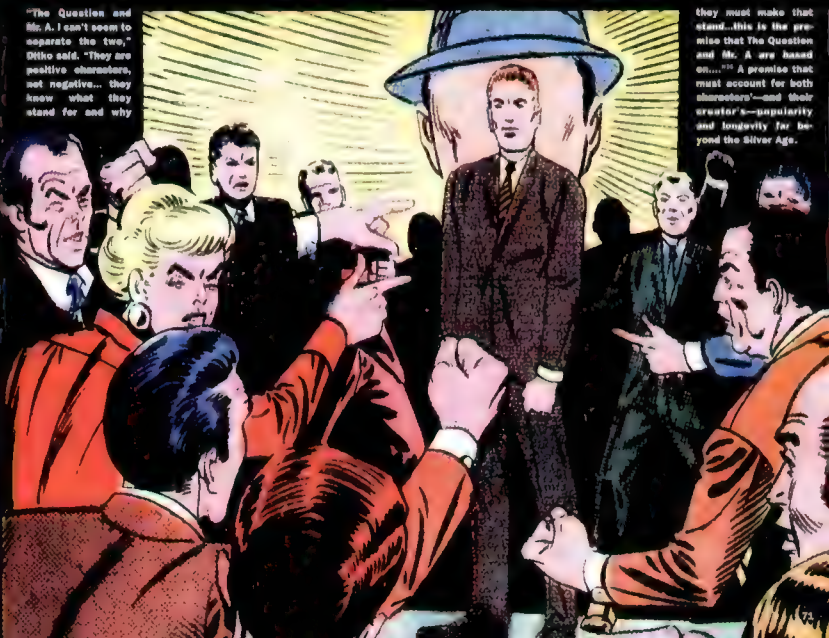
"WHERE OTHER HEROES CHOOSE TO BE SELF-MADE NEUROTICS, THE QUESTION AND MR. A CHOOSE TO BE PSYCHOLOGICALLY AND INTELLECTUALLY HEALTHY."

"A NEUROTIC, AN ANTI-HERO, CAN BE SHOWN TO BE 'HEROIC' BUT HE CAN NEVER BECOME A HERO."

"A HERO IN THE HIGHEST USE OF THE WORD, STRENGTH NOT BECAUSE OF SUPER POWERS, BUT STRENGTH OF ACTING ON PROPER PRINCIPLES, NOT A CONTRIVED STRENGTH OF MUSCLE, BUT A STRENGTH OF RIGHT KNOWLEDGE."

What a difference four years makes. Contrast this panel above, (from *Silver-Side* #17, Oct. 1964), scripted by Lee, to this *Question* panel below, (from *Mysterious Suspense* #2, Oct. 1968), with its caption (right), written by Ditko:

"The Question and Mr. A. I can't seem to separate the two," Ditko said. "They are positive characters, not negative... they know what they stand for and why



"WHAT IS THE GREATEST BATTLE AN INDIVIDUAL MUST FIGHT? IS IT AGAINST THE MYSTIC TERRORS OF UNKNOWN DIMENSIONS? IS IT AGAINST THE HORDES OF ALIEN BEINGS FROM OUTER SPACE, OR AGAINST FOREIGN ARMIES OR CRIMINAL CONSPIRACIES? NO! THE GREATEST BATTLE YOU OR ANY PERSON MUST CONSTANTLY FIGHT IS NOT ANY OF THOSE! WHAT, THEN, IS MAN'S GREATEST BATTLE?"

they must make that stand...this is the premise that *The Question* and Mr. A are based on...." A premise that must account for both characters—and their creator's—popularity and longevity far beyond the Silver Age.





# JACK KIRBY

IT WOULD TAKE MORE THAN ONE BOOK TO DO JUSTICE TO THE BREADTH OF COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS AND CONCEPTS JACK KIRBY CREATED DURING THE COURSE OF HIS SEVEN DECADES IN COMICS. WORKING FOR A VARIETY OF PUBLISHERS, NEVERTHELESS, IT IS THE MODERN MARVEL UNIVERSE DEVELOPED IN CONCERT WITH VENTURE EDITOR STAN LEE DURING THE SILVER AGE THAT ARGUABLY STANDS AS KIRBY'S GREATEST AND MOST INFLUENTIAL BODY OF WORK. IN THE LATE 1950S, AFTER AN ALREADY LEGENDARY CAREER (CO-CREATING WITH PARTNER JOE SIMON, CAPTAIN AMERICA, AND ENTIRE COMIC BOOK GENRES LIKE ROMANCE COMICS), KIRBY ENTERED A MORIBUND MARVEL COMICS ON THE BRINK OF BANKRUPTCY. DRIVEN BY HIS DEPRESSION ERA BACKGROUND, KIRBY LET LOOSE A WELLSPRING OF INVENTION THE LINES OF WHICH HAD NEVER BEEN SEEN IN THE COMIC BOOK MEDIUM — AND HAS NEVER SINCE BEEN DUPLICATED. I FELT THERE WAS TO COME UP WITH NEW STUFF ALL THE TIME, KIRBY RECALLED IN 1987. IN OTHER WORDS, THERE HAD TO BE A BUTZ, AND I CAME UP WITH THE BUTZ.

THE FANTASTIC FOUR, THE HULK, THOR, THE X-MEN, THE SILVER SURFER, THE BLACK PANTHER, THE INHUMANS — THE 'BUTZ' OF TIMELESS MARVEL CHARACTERS KIRBY HELPED BRING TO LIFE IS ALMOST ENDLESS. DURING HIS TENURE AT MARVEL IN THE 1960S, KIRBY'S MODERN NATURE STYLE EMERGED. THE TRULY ARTISTIC TROPES KIRBY RENDERED — ABSTRACT, INTANGIBLE CONCEPTS LIKE 'POWER' AND 'ENERGY' MADE MANIFEST IN HYPERBOLIC VISUAL DIMENSION — BECAME STANDARDS IN THE MEDIUM.

KIRBY WAS AS PROFOUND AS HE WAS PROLIFIC. THE STORIES HE TOLD AT MARVEL EXPLODED WITH BOUNDLESS IMAGINATION AND WONDER. THEY WERE KALEIDOSCOPES OF ACTION AND ADVENTURE SET IN PLANET-SIZED ARENAS OF CONFLICT, CATAclysmic CLASHES OF TITANS THAT READ LIKE THE EPIC ODYSSEYS OF LEGENDS PAST. KIRBY'S WORKS ARE THE POWER AND GLORY OF COMIC BOOK STORYTELLING, AND LIKE THE LEGENDARY ATLAS, IT IS UPON KIRBY'S SHOULDERS THAT THE WORLD OF SUPERHEROES RESTS.

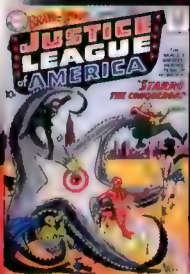
THE SECRET OF MY SUCCESS, KIRBY SAID, IS THE FACT THAT I GAVE TO IT. I GAVE IT ALL I HAD. THERE IS BLOOD AND BONE AND SWEAT BEHIND THE WHOLE THING. THERE ARE HOURS OF THINKING AND HOURS OF DOING, AND THEN I SPARED NOTHING. I GAVE IT EVERYTHING. THAT'S COME OUT OF IT. IS FOR YOU TO PICK UP AND LOOK AT.



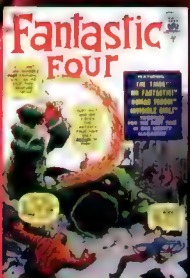
**STORY BY JIMMY K. HOLLAND. "MEET THE FANTASTIC FOUR"**

The chapters. Chapter one is 6 pages. Chapter 2 is 5 pages.

Characters: 1) NEDD RICHARDS. ( ) Es is young, handsome



The first appearance of DC Comics' use of recently-revamped techno-



...an you come up with a team of superheroes like the Justice League of America?" — Martin Goodman, Marvel Comics' publisher, to his editor/writer Stan Lee.  
 (source: *Fantastic Four* #1, Nov. 1961, inked by Dick Ayers.)

"Stan, if Martin wants you to create a new group of superheroes, this could be a chance for you to do it the way you've always wanted to... and create characters who have interesting personalities, who speak like real people."  
— Joanne Lee, Stan Lee's wife



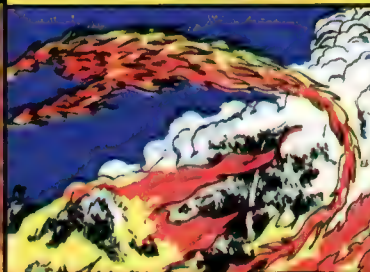
"Let's make The Thing the heavy — in other words, he's not really a good guy... he isn't interested in helping mankind the way the other three are... The Thing doesn't have the ethics that the other three have, and consequently he will probably be the most interesting one to the reader, because he'll always be unpredictable." — from Lee's plot synopsis to *Fantastic Four* #1



"When people began talking about the (atomic) bomb and its effect on human beings," said Kirby in 1989, "they began talking about mutations because that's a distinct possibility. And I said, 'That's a great idea.' That's how the Fantastic Four began, with an atomic explosion and its effect on the characters."



"Susan Storm became invisible because of the atomic effects on her body. Ben Grimm, who was a college man and a fine-looking man, suddenly became The Thing. Reed Richards became flexible and became a character that I could work with in various ways. And there were others..."  
Background and four panels: Kirby's art from *Fantastic Four* #1, Nov. 1961, inked by George Klein, over Lee's plot synopsis.

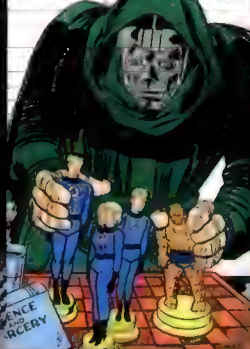






Issue #66, Jul. 1963, inked by Dick Ayers.

KIRBY'S PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S ARMOR MEMES VARIED OVER THE YEARS. 'DR. DOOM WAS THE CLASSIC CONCEPTION OF DEATH,' HE SAID IN 1987. 'IT WAS THE REASON FOR THE ARMOR AND THE HOOD. DEATH IS CONNECTED WITH ARMOR AND THE INHUMAN-LIKE STEEL. DEATH IS SOMETHING WITHOUT MERCY AND HUMAN FLESH CONTAINS THAT ELEMENT OF MERCY.'



Panel 11 from splash page, issue #66.



Annual #2, 1964, inked by Otto Steiner.

IN THE EARLY 1960s, KIRBY SAID, 'WHAT WAS WORRYING WITH DR. DOOM? HE WAS A VERY HIGHLY REGARDED SCIENTIST, AND THERE WAS AN EXPLOSION IN HIS LABORATORY AND IT RUINED HIS FACE. IT SCARRED HIS FACE FOR LIFE AND BEING THE PERFECTIONIST THAT HE WAS, HE HAD TO HIDE THAT FACE, AND HOW? IN A MASK OF IRON AND STEEL.'



Issue #38, Jun. 1966, inked by Vince Colletta and Wally Wood (Daredevil only).



Issue #97, Dec. 1968, inked by Sinnott.



IN 1976, KIRBY SAID, 'DR. DOOM IS A PARANOID. HE THINKS HE'S UGLY AND HE WANTS THE WHOLE WORLD TO BE LIKE HIM... PARANOIDS ARE INSANE PEOPLE WHO NEVER GET THEIR MATH.'

All art from Fantastic Four comics, scripted by Stan Lee.  
Background: Issue #69, Feb. 1967, inked by Joe Sinnott.

Issue #69, May 1966, inked by Sinnott.



Pencil sketch, circa 1970-1976.



WHEN KIRBY DID THIS STARTLING DRAWING (LEFT) IN THE EARLY '70s, HE REVEALED THIS ABOUT DR. DOOM: HE'S A GOOD-LOOKING GUY, AND HE ONLY HAS A TINY SCAR ON HIS CHEEK, BUT BECAUSE HE'S SUCH A PERFECTIONIST, HE CAN'T BEAR TO SEE THAT IMPERFECTION. HE ISN'T HIDING HIS FACE FROM THE PUBLIC, HE'S HIDING IT FROM HIMSELF.

Issue #97, Jan. 1969, inked by Sinnott.





**IT WAS THE THING WAS A TRAGEDY, KIRBY**  
**A MUTATION, NEVER KNOWING WHO**  
**WHAT YOU'D LOOK LIKE TO YOUR FOLKS**  
**"EVERYBODY SEEMED TO ASSOCIATE**  
**BECAUSE HE ACTED LIKE A REGULAR**

The gradual development of The Thing's relationship with Iron

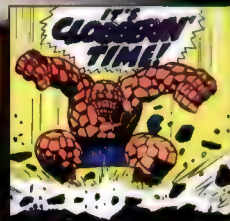
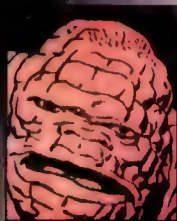
Issue #1, Nov. 1963, inked by Ross Ayers.  
 Issue #15, Jan. 1965, inked by Ayers.  
 Issue #27, Apr. 1965, inked by Chic Stone

Background: Issue #40, Jul. 1965, the death of  
 The Thing's definitive rock-out, January Time

Bottom Cover & splash page, Issue #40, 1965, inked by Kirby  
 inked by Kirby  
 Important Lee/Kirby story on the cover and

**NO MATTER WHAT HE LOOKED LIKE, THE THING NEVER CHANGED HIS**  
**PERSONALITY — HE WAS ALWAYS A HUMAN BEING, DESPITE HIS PHYSICAL**  
**CHANGE. BEN GRIMM ALWAYS REMAINED BEN GRIMM. I THINK THAT'S WHY**  
**THE READER LIKED HIM, THAT TOUCH OF REALITY."**  
**I SUPPOSE I MUST BE A LOT LIKE BEN GRIMM."**

Issue #40 to right: Issue #46, Dec. 1965, and Issue #48, Jan. 1966, inked by Joe Sinnott. With a limited talent pool of artists, Kirby nevertheless provided The Thing with a subtle complexity and depth by the ink of Sinnott, considered by many to be the greatest comic book artist of the 20th century. "He was the greatest comic book artist I ever knew to do so much work with him," Kirby said. "I was associated with him, to be a part of his life, was a privilege enough for me. I never said for anything more."







According to Kirby himself: "The way The Thing talks and acts, you'll find that [he] is really Jack Kirby. He has my manner, he has my manner of speech, and he thinks the way I do. He's very active among people, and he can muscle his way through a crowd... I'm that sort of person."

Inset: On this sketch

for a fan, D. Bruce Berry,

Kirby

wrote,

"Because I

think your

comics are great.

However, you

should include

some backgrounds

for the characters.

Keep drawing as you

are, and you'll develop

your own style of doing

things — your pal, Jack

Kirby '61." Berry later

became one of Kirby's

relays in the 1970s.



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Above left: Journey Into Mystery #82, May 1962, inked by Steve Ditko. "No idea," he admitted, "the closest I got to the original version of Marvel's recent past." "It was a challenge to try to do something with these religious characters," Kirby said. "But these were, in a way, the forerunners of the Marvel heroes. We had a thing, we had a religion—people tried to be like us, or more accurate."

Above right: The Incredible Hulk #1, May 1962, inked by Paul Reinman. The Hulk's original gray coloring was OK'd by Lee, who said, "I thought [it] would look kinda spooky." The very next issue the Hulk assumed his permanent green and never looked back.



Aurora Frankenstein model box cover, 1961, painted by the great James ("Doc Savage") Bama. With sales of over one million, the "sleeping toy of 1961" is considered a significant influence on publisher Goodman's creative dictum that The Hulk be a "Super-Frankenstein."

**I CREATED THE HULK!**  
WHEN I SAW A WOMAN LIFT A CAR! HER BABY WAS CAUGHT UNDER THE RUNNING BOARD! HIS MOTHER WAS HORRIFIED! AND THIS WOMAN IN DESPERATION LIFTED THE REAR END OF THE CAR!  
IT SUDDENLY CAME TO ME THAT IN DESPERATION WE CAN ALL DO THAT. WE CAN KNOCK DOWN WALLS, WE CAN GO BERSERK! YOU CAN TEAR A HOUSE DOWN! I CREATED A CHARACTER WHO DID ALL THAT, AND CALLED HIM... **THE HULK!**

# THE HULK



For authentic Bruce Banner January 1956, in The Wreckers of the Fantastic Four. Script by Stan Lee, inked by Dick Ayers.



I CREATED THE HULK. AND SAW HIM AS A KIND OF HANDSOME FRANKENSTEIN! I NEVER FELT THE HULK WAS A MONSTER, BECAUSE I FELT THE HULK WAS ME! I FEEL ALL THE CHARACTERS WERE ME!



Right: Detail, Tales to Astonish #60, Oct. 1964, inked by Sol Brodsky.  
Center: Splash page, of Hulk #1, inked by Reinman.  
Left of center: Pin-up, Fantastic Four Annual #1, 1963, inked by Brodsky.

Detail from cover of Tales to Astonish #67, May 1966, inked by Oleo Stone. Stone's boldly outlined, cartoonish inkling of Kirby's 1964-68 pencils remains a favorite among fifty artbaboons.





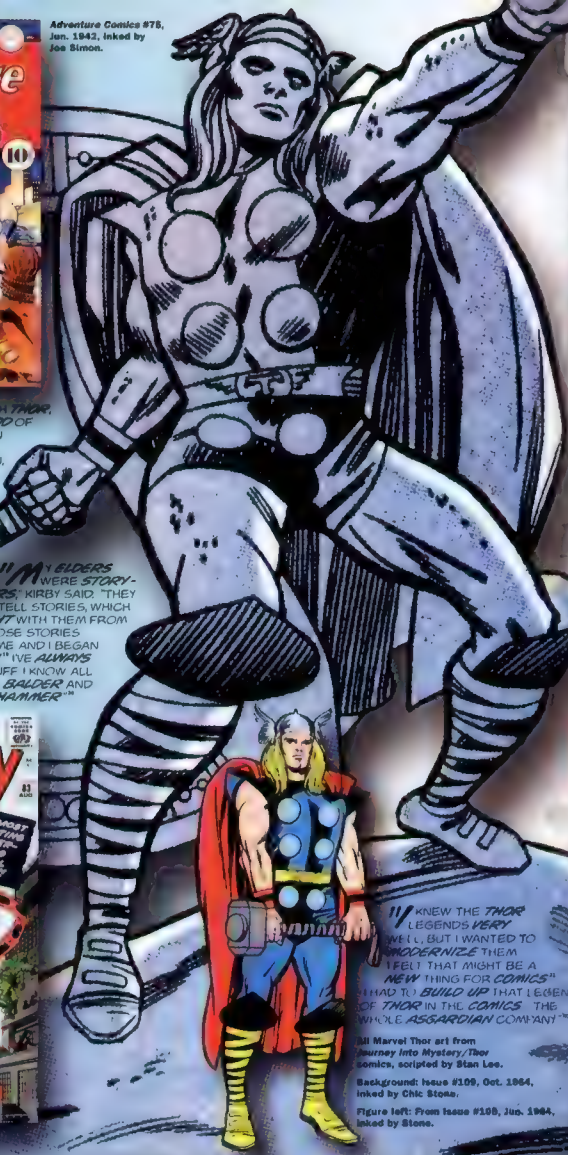
Adventure Comics #75,  
Jun. 1942, inked by  
Joe Simon.

KIRBY'S ASSOCIATION WITH THOR, THE LEGENDARY NORSE GOD OF THUNDER, DATES EARLIER THAN THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMICS. WHEN, WITH PARTNER JOE SIMON, HE PORTRAYED THOR AS A VIL-  
LAIN FIGHTING DC HEROES SANDMAN AND SANDO, TO HIS CHILDHOOD AS A FIRST-GENERATION AMERICAN SON OF IMMIGRANTS.

"MY ELDERS WERE STORY-TELLERS," KIRBY SAID. "THEY LOVED TO TELL STORIES, WHICH THEY BROUGHT WITH THEM FROM EUROPE, AND THOSE STORIES ALWAYS INTRIGUED ME AND I BEGAN TO CONCEIVE MY OWN." "I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A HISTORY BUFF. I KNOW ALL ABOUT THOR AND BALDER AND JODINER THE HAMMER."



Thor's  
inked by Joe Simon and Dick Ayers.



"I KNEW THE THOR LEGEND'S VERY WELL, BUT I WANTED TO MODERNIZE THEM. I FELT THAT MIGHT BE A NEW THING FOR COMICS." "I HAD TO BUILD UP THAT LEGEND OF THOR IN THE COMICS. THE WHOLE ASSARDIAN CONVENT."

All Marvel Thor art from Journey Into Mystery/Thor comics, scripted by Stan Lee.

Background: Issue #109, Oct. 1964, inked by Chic Stone.

Figure left: From issue #109, Jun. 1964, inked by Stone.



"BUT, ERE THE BATTLE BE RESOLVED..."

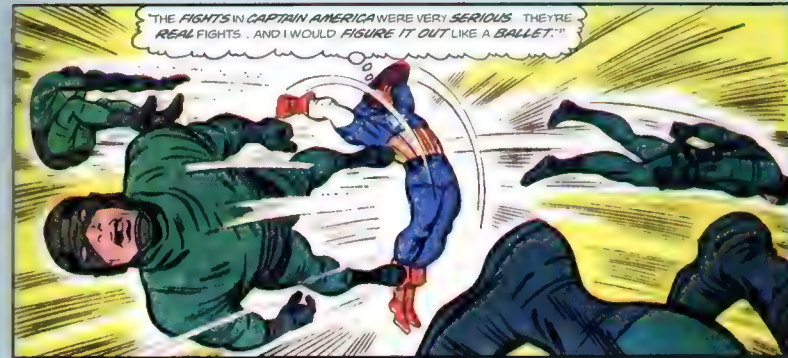
"LET THUNDER GOD PREVAIL!!"

Full page from issue #101, Feb. 1964, inked by Vince Colletta, who many say was to Thor what Joe Simon was to Fantastic Four: the feature's longtime, definitive ideam. Colletta's then, certainly pen line — far away from Simon's thick-line brush-stroke — seemed to suit the rough and tumble, stone and metal mis-adventure of Thor's world best.





WHEN CAPTAIN AMERICA WAS REVIVED TO TAKE PART IN THE SILVER AGE MARVEL REVOLUTION, A CIRCLE WAS COMPLETED, AS KIRBY RETURNED TO THE CHARACTER HE MADE FAMOUS IN THE GOLDEN AGE. ONLY THIS TIME, AT FULL ARTISTIC MATURITY, I LOVED DOING CAPTAIN AMERICA BECAUSE IT GAVE ME A CHANCE TO BE AGGRESSIVE AND POWERFUL," KIRBY SAID. THE SAME REASON FICTIONAL WEAKLING STEVE ROGERS BECAME CAPTAIN AMERICA!<sup>10</sup>

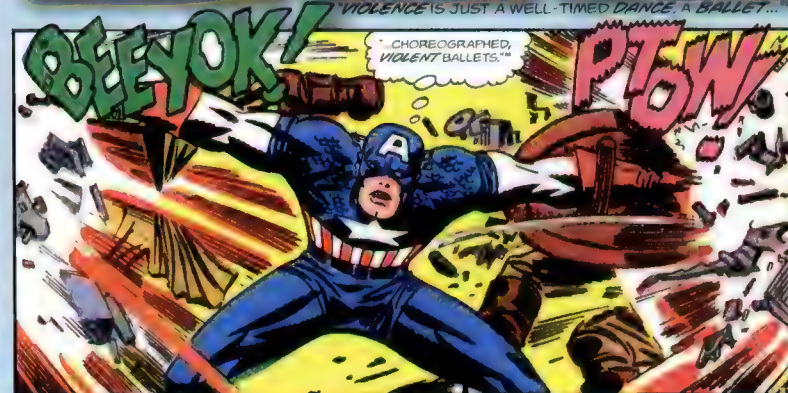
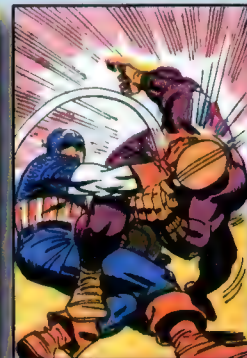


I LIKED FIGURES THAT MOVED, FIGURES THAT FOUGHT AND TWISTED<sup>11B</sup>



Clockwise from upper left:  
 Captain America #1, Mar. 1941, inked by Joe Simon.  
 Detail from cover of Tales of Suspense #93, Mar. 1968, inked by Chic Stone.  
 The return of Captain America in Avengers #4, Mar. 1964, inked by George Rousseau.  
 Tales of Suspense #90, Dec. 1964, inked by Stone.  
 Sequence from Tales of Suspense #85, Jan. 1967, inked by Frank Giacoia.  
 Tales of Suspense #86, Feb. 1967, inked by Frank Giacoia.  
 Splash page from Tales of Suspense #89, Nov. 1964, inked by Stone.

"MOVEMENT TO ME IS EVERYTHING TO ME. MOTION IS LIFE." CAPTAIN AMERICA IS ALL MOTION, IT'S ALL MOVEMENT, AND IT'S ALL LIFE... THAT'S MY STYLE... PURE ACTION AND REACTION<sup>12</sup> WHEN ASKED TO NAME HIS FAVORITE WORK OF HIS CAREER, KIRBY DIDN'T HESITATE "THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT CAPTAIN AMERICA BECAME SOME KIND OF AN INSTITUTION WITH SOME KIND OF A LEGENDARY STATUS. I ACCEPT THAT AS PROBABLY THE BIG ONE."<sup>13</sup>







Kirby's first collage cover, *Fantastic Four* #33, 1964. Line art inked by Gicle Simon.

AROUND 1964, IN THE PAGES OF *FANTASTIC FOUR* AND *THOR*, KIRBY'S ART AND STORYTELLING CONCEPTS TOOK LEAPS IN DEVELOPMENT, COMPLEXITY AND EXPERIMENTATION THAT SIGNALLED THE START OF HIS MOST CREATIVE ERA. "COLLAGES WERE ANOTHER WAY OF FINDING NEW AVENUES OF ENTERTAINMENT," KIRBY SAID.

I FELT THAT MAGAZINE REPRODUCTION COULD HANDLE THAT CHANGE. IT ADDED AN EXTRA DIMENSION TO COMICS.

I WANTED TO SEE IF IT COULD MATERIALIZE AND IT DID. I LOVED DOING COLLAGES. I MADE A LOT OF GOOD ONES.

I FELT LIKE EXPERIMENTING WITH SHAPES.

IT WAS LIKE PUTTING MOVIE SETS AND JUST LET THEM RUN RIOTOUS.



Double-page collage from *Fantastic Four Annual* #6, Nov. 1966. Line art inked by Joe Stewart.



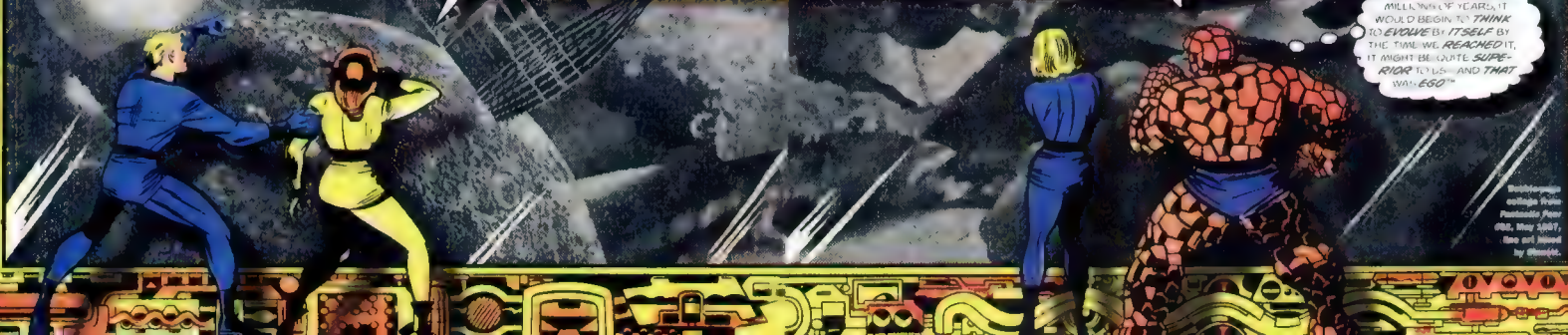
Full-page collage from *Thor* #155, Sep. 1965.

THAT'S HOW THE NEGATIVE ZONE CAME ABOUT. I BEGAN TO EXPERIMENT. I BEGAN TO THROW MY MIND OUT IN ALL DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS. AND THAT'S HOW EGO CAME ABOUT.

I HAD TO DO A STORY ABOUT A GUY WHO WAS A PUNY THING WHO HAD A PLAN THAT WAS INTELLIGENT. BUT HOW DO YOU RELATE TO IT? WHY IS HE ALIVE?

IT WAS SOMETHING OUT IN THE UNIVERSE. IT BECAME DENSER AND TURNED LIQUID. AND IN THIS LIQUID THERE WAS A GIANT MULTIPLE VIRUS. AND IF IT REMAINED ISOLATED.

FOR MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF YEARS, IT WOULD BEGINS TO THINK TO EVOLVE BY ITSELF BY THE TIME WE REACHED IT, IT MIGHT BE QUOTE SUPERIOR TEXTS AND THAT WAS EGO.

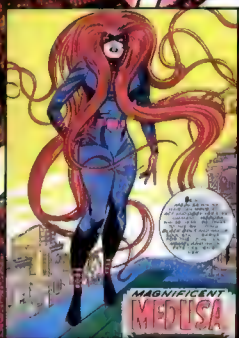


Double-page collage from *Fantastic Four* #30, May 1967. Line art inked by Gicle Simon.





**GORGON**



**MAGNIFICENT MEDUSA**

Reels this page: Pick-ups from *Fantastic Four* Annual #5, Nov. 1967.

"MY IDEA OF A SUPERHERO IS SOME GUY WHO CAN ENGAGE IN ACTION, AND YOU CAN'T ENGAGE IN ACTION IF A BUSINESS SUIT IS ALWAYS GAVE THEM A SUITFIGHT UNIFORM WITH A BELT. NOW I DRESS THEM UP BLACK. BOY, RIGHT I BEGAN TO DRESS LIKE THE MARTINIS IN GIBBY KARNAK WITH THE JUDO TYPE UNIFORM. IT'S ALMOST ORIENTAL AND HALF EGYPTIAN. NO MEDUSA WITH HER HAIR."

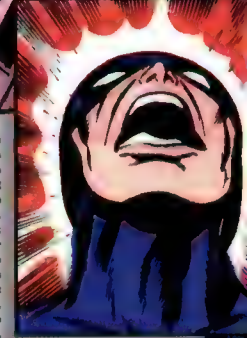
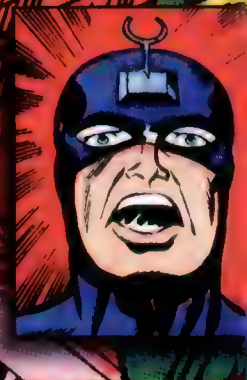


**KARNAK THE SMITHY**



**THE MYSTERIOUS TRITON**

All art from *Fantastic Four* comics, scripted by Lee, inked by Sitnick. Background: Issue #80, Feb. 1967.



With apologies to Munch's "The Scream," Kirby's sequence (continuing onto the next page) from Issue #87, Dec. 1966, the unleashing of Black Bolt's inhuman ability for the first time, is just as convincing in its rendering of an abstract concept — intangible, infinite power — made manifest.



**STUDENTS OF KIRBY'S SEE, IN HIS MANY WIDESCREEN SCENES OF UTTER DEVASTATION (OF WHICH THIS—THE DESTRUCTION OF THE INHUMAN'S DOOMED CITY BY BLACK BOLT'S SONIC SCREAM—PERHAPS THE EPITOME), THE INFLUENCE GROWING UP IN THE CACOPHONOUS, CLAUSTROPHOBIC, CRUMBLING TENEMENT SLUMS OF NEW YORK'S LOWER EAST SIDE HAD ON KIRBY GRAPHICALLY**

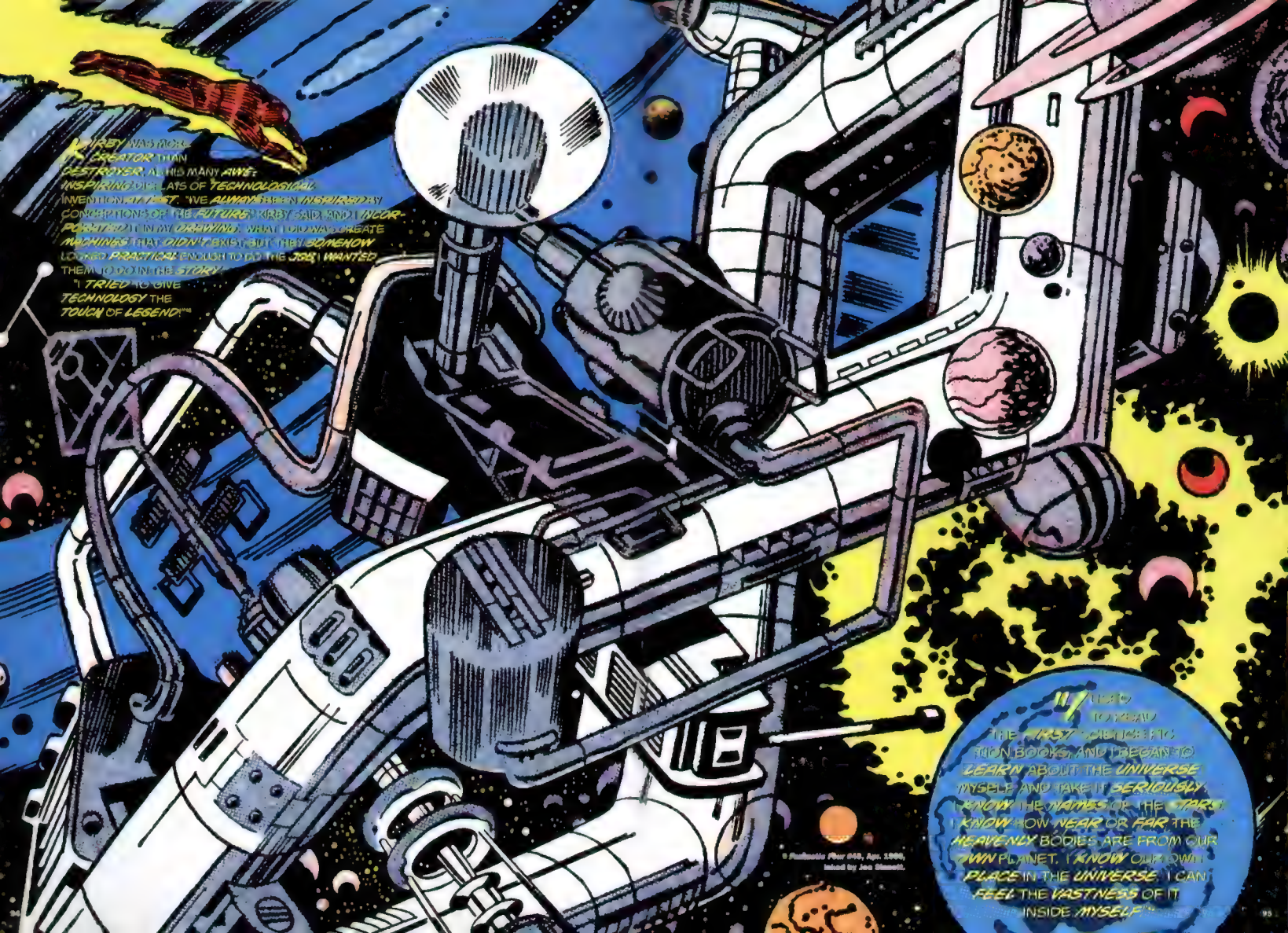
SAVE ME,  
BLACK BOLT!!  
SAVE ME,  
MY BROTHER!



"IF YOU GROW UP IN A CITY AND SEE THE CITY," KIRBY RECALLED, "YOU'LL GET A CITY AS IT REALLY IS, WITH ALL THE DETAIL THAT YOU REMEMBER. I WOULD DRAW THAT CITY EXACTLY AS IT WAS. BRICK BY BRICK, THE GARAGES IN THE STREET AND THE THINGS FLOATING DOWN TO THE CURB."  
 "I WAS DRAWING THE SCENES OF THE CHIPPED BRICK WALLS OF THE SLUMS, FIRST DRAWING BOARD."

Background: Lee's original caption read, "Black Bolt and Maximus find themselves in the center of a lethal rain of debris—the remnants of a once-prosperous city—as the vibration continues to grow to apocalyptic levels."  
 Inset: Debris-pond turned from the 1960s/70s "Street Scene" poster. Artist: [illegible], July 1966.





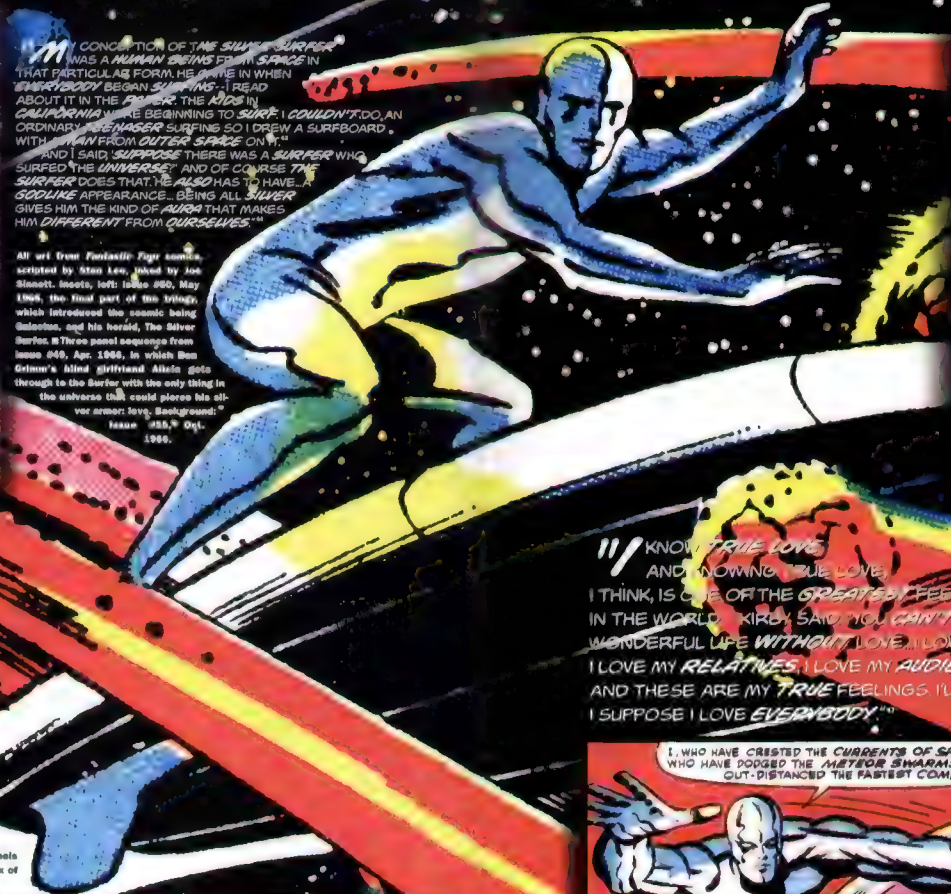
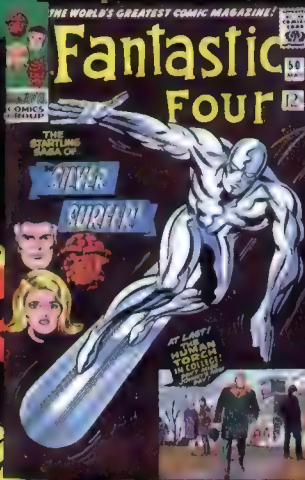
HE WAS MORE  
A CREATOR THAN  
A DESTROYER. AL HIS MANY AWE-  
INSPIRING DISPLAYS OF TECHNOLOGICAL  
INVENTION IN A MET, "WE ALWAYS WERE INSPIRED BY  
CONCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE," KIRBY SAID, AND I ACCO-  
R-  
POUNDED IT IN MY DREAMING. WHAT I WOULD CREATE  
MACHINES THAT DIDN'T EXIST, BUT THEY SOMEHOW  
LOOKED PRACTICAL ENOUGH TO DO THE JOB I WANTED  
THEM TO DO IN THE STORY.

"I TRIED TO GIVE  
TECHNOLOGY THE  
TOUCH OF LEGEND."

"I USED  
TO READ  
THE FIRST SCIENCE FICTION  
BOOKS, AND I BEGAN TO  
LEARN ABOUT THE UNIVERSE  
MYSELF AND TAKE IT SERIOUSLY.  
I KNOW THE NAMES OF THE STARS.  
I KNOW HOW NEAR OR FAR THE  
HEAVENLY BODIES ARE FROM OUR  
OWN PLANET. I KNOW OUR OWN  
PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE. I CAN  
FEEL THE VASTNESS OF IT  
INSIDE MYSELF."

© Publisher: Marvel, Apr. 1999.  
Illustrated by Joe Simon.





Issue #72, Mar. 1966.

"CONCEPTION OF THE SILVER SURFER WAS A HUMAN BEING FROM SPACE IN THAT PARTICULAR FORM, HE WENT IN WHEN EVERYBODY BEGAN SURFING—I READ ABOUT IT IN THE *PAPER*. THE *KIDS* IN CALIFORNIA WERE BEGINNING TO SURF, I COULDN'T DO AN ORDINARY BEACHER SURFING SO I DREW A SURFBOARD WITH A TAIL FROM OUTER SPACE ON IT."  
 "AND I SAID, 'SUPPOSE THERE WAS A SURFER WHO SURFED THE UNIVERSE?' AND OF COURSE THE SURFER DOES THAT HE ALSO HAS TO HAVE A GODLIKE APPEARANCE, BEING ALL SILVER GIVES HIM THE KIND OF *AURA* THAT MAKES HIM DIFFERENT FROM OURSELVES."

All art from *Fantastic Four* stories scripted by Stan Lee, inked by Joe Sinnott. Insets, left: issue #50, May 1965, the final part of this trilogy, which introduced the cosmic being Galactus, and his herald, The Silver Surfer. B: Three panel sequence from issue #46, Apr. 1964, in which Ben Grimm's blind girlfriend Alicia gets through to the Surfer with the only thing in the universe that could pierce his all-visor armor: love. Background: issue #55, Oct. 1966.

"I KNOW TRUE LOVE AND KNOWING TRUE LOVE I THINK, IS ONE OF THE GREATEST FEELINGS IN THE WORLD. KIRBY SAID YOU CAN'T HAVE A WONDERFUL LIFE WITHOUT LOVE. I LOVE MY CHILDREN, I LOVE MY RELATIVES, I LOVE MY AUDIENCE, AND THESE ARE MY TRUE FEELINGS I'LL NEVER DENY THEM. I SUPPOSE I LOVE EVERYBODY."

Issue #45, Dec. 1966.

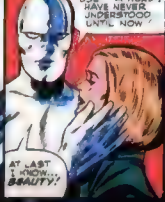
Below: Two panels from the climax of issue #50.



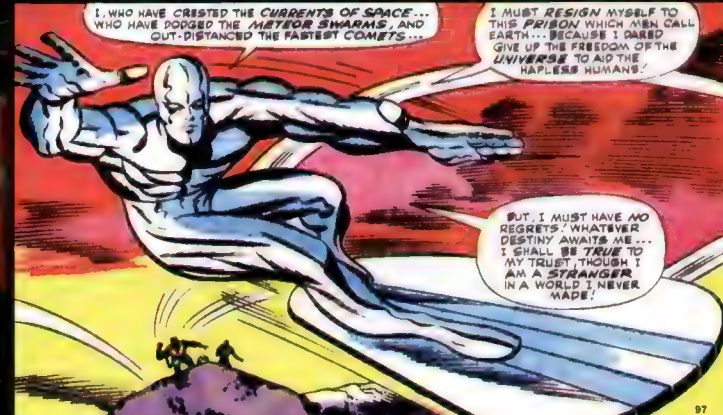
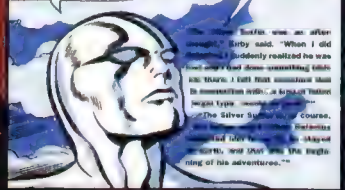
"AUTOMATICALLY, THE SUBSTANCES AND OF THE SILVER SURFER, RAISED TOWARD THE SOUTHERN FOREVER WITH A GRIMACE, BUT THEN HE PAUSED."



"...OR KNOWN THIS STRANGE FEELING... THIS NEW EMOTION... THERE IS A WORD SOME RACES USE A WORD I HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD UNTIL NOW."



"I WAS BORN TO SOAR... TO RIDE THE CURRENTS OF SPACE... NOT TO BE CONFINED WITHIN A BARREN STRUCTURE!"  
 "THOUGH THE PATHWAYS TO THE STARS ARE NOW DENIED ME, MY PLACE IS STILL... IN THE SKIES ABOVE!"



"I, WHO HAVE CROSSED THE CURRENTS OF SPACE... WHO HAVE DODGED THE METEOR SWARMS, AND OUT-DISTANCED THE FASTEST COMETS... I MUST RESIGN MYSELF TO THIS PRISON WHICH MEN CALL EARTH... BECAUSE I GAVE UP THE FREEDOM OF THE UNIVERSE TO AID THE UNLAPSED HUMANS!"

"BUT I MUST HAVE NO REGRETS! WHATEVER DESTINY AWAITS ME... I SHALL BE TRUE TO MY TRUST, THOUGH I AM A STRANGER IN A WORLD I NEVER MADE!"

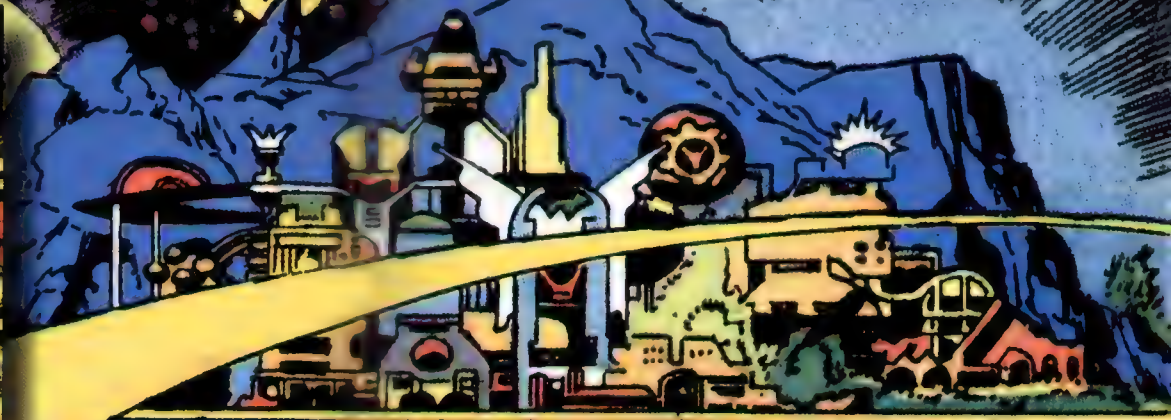


[illegible]

**GOD IS A TRUE  
GOD IN THE  
MYTHS OF MODERN  
SPIRITUALITY  
GOD IN THE  
MODERN  
CONTEXT  
THE GOD OF  
TRANSFORMING  
OUR CONTEMPORARY  
LIVES SO WE CAN  
ACCEPT**

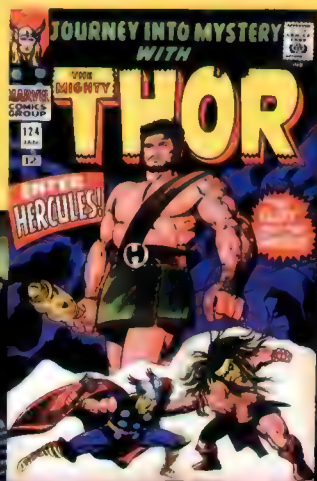
**NOW LET  
MANKIND  
BEWARE--FOR  
DOCTOR DOOM  
HAS ATTAINED  
POWERS WITHOUT  
LIMIT--POWER  
ENOUGH TO  
CHALLENGE  
GALACTUS  
HIMSELF!**





Inset, left: Kirby's *Banner*: Thor #123, Dec. 1965, inked by Vince Colletta.  
Background: The Rainbow Bridge of Asgard, from Thor #123, inked by Colletta.

"I began to realize," Kirby said, "what a wonderful and awesome place the universe is, and that helped me in comics because I was looking for the awesome. I found it in Thor."™ The collected backup stories in *Tales of Asgard* #1, Oct. 1966 (colors cover inked by Frank Blasola), were the catalyst that broadened Thor's scope. Over the course of the decade, Kirby transformed Thor from Supermarine-Viking-costume to an iconic warlord with a stature that befit his title of god. Kirby surrounded him with a cast of what seems to be thousands of fellow warriors, cosmic beings, deities and demons for awe-inspiring adventures beyond Earth, into Asgard, and through the universe. With Stan Lee's pseudo-Shakespearean wordsmithing elevating the prose, Kirby's Thor scaled heights in the Silver Age that reached that comic Valhalla whose sole occupant was Hal Foster's comic strip masterpiece, *Prince Valiant*.



Kirby's *Hercules*: Thor #124, Jan. 1966, inked by Colletta.




"THE TRUTH IS THAT THE GREEKS HAD HERCULES. EVEN AS THE NORMAN HAD THOR. AND THROUGH THE AGES WE'VE HAD HEROES SIMILAR TO THEM. IN 1858, FIRST, WE HAD SAMUEL JOHNSON MORE THAN FOUR THOUSAND YEARS AGO. AND TODAY WE HAVE OUR OWN HERCULES."



"The HAMMER And The HOLOCAUST!"

Kirby's *Plato*: Thor #127, Apr. 1966, inked by Colletta.





ACCORDING TO **YOLLA, THE PROPHETESS**, THE DAY OF **RAGNAROK** IS ALMOST AT HAND! **RAGNAROK**... THE END OF THE WORLD!! EVEN AS **YOLLA** SPEAKS, THE ASSEMBLED GODS WITNESS, IN THEIR IMAGINATION, THE LAST AGONIZING MOMENTS OF **ASGARD**, AS SHE PREDICTS THE GOLDEN REALM BEING WRACKED BY FIRE, FLOOD, AND THE FLAMES OF BATTLE...!



**MAGNUM OPUS**, THE **FOURTH WORLD** SERIES OF FOUR INTERRELATED COMIC BOOKS, OF WHICH **NEW GODS** WAS THE **FLAESHIP** TITLE

Background: The splash page of the May 1966 Thor #128's Tales of Asgard episode, "Aftermath" scripted by Lee, inked by Vlimo Colletta. Inset: Thor #127, Oct. 1966, inked by Colletta.

## EPILOGUE

THERE CAME A TIME WHEN THE OLD GODS DIED! THE BRAVE DIED WITH THE CUNNING! THE NOBLE PERISHED, LOCKED IN BATTLE WITH UNLEASHED EVIL! IT WAS THE LAST DAY FOR THEM! AN ANCIENT ERA WAS PASSING IN FIERY HOLOCAUST!



"I'VE READ ALL THE LEGENDS" THAT WERE WRITTEN BEFORE OUR TIME," KIRBY SAID, AND **SOMEHOW**, I FELT THAT WE HAD NO LEGENDS. "I SAID **OWN**. I HAD TO CREATE A MODERN LEGEND OF OUR OWN, AND I DID THIS WITH THE **NEW GODS**. IT WAS A **FATHER-SON** AFFAIR, JUST LIKE ALL OUR PREVIOUS LEGENDS. THERE WAS **THOR** AND **ODIN**, THERE WAS

**HERCULES** AND **ZEUS**, AND I FELT THAT IN OUR AGE IT WOULD BE **DARKSEID** AND **ORION**!"

I WAS CREATING A MYTHOLOGY FOR THE 1970S..."

AN EPIC FOR OUR TIMES

ORION FIGHTS FOR EARTH!

KIRBY TOOK HIS SUPERHEROES AS GODS—CONCEPTS AS FAR AS HE COULD IN THE PAGES OF **THOR**. EVEN PICTURING **RAGNAROK**, THE ASSARDIAN ARMAGEDDON, WHEN HE FELT HE COULDN'T TAKE THEM FURTHER AT MARVEL, HE LEFT THE COMPANY IN 1970 AND TOOK THOSE IDEAS TO DC, WHERE HE BOTH WROTE AND DREW WHAT MANY CONSIDER HIS

Background: The splash page of New Gods #1, Mar. 1971 (whose precursor was the splash page opposite), written by Kirby, inked by Colletta. Inset: New Gods #1.







ONE OF THE **IRONIES** OF **SL KANE'S** SILVER AGE CAREER IS THAT HIS **RENOUV** AS DEFINITIVE **GREEN LANTERN** ARTIST IS IN **CONVERSE** PROPORTION TO HIS **SELF-ASSESSMENT**. "I THINK A LOT OF MY WORK ON **GREEN LANTERN** WAS VERY **PRIMITIVE**," HE SAID. "THE CHARACTER WAS TOO **MORONIC** TO HAVE A **POWER** THAT WAS GENERALLY ATTRIBUTED TO A **GOD**. IT BECAME **POINTLESS** AND **IMBECILIC** SO MY **CONCERNS** DRIFTED INTO **IMPROVING MY CRAFT**."

**Right:** Figure from a splash page in *Green Lantern* #46, Jul. 1966, inked by Sid Greene. Although Kane preferred Greene because he "was the most consistent and best inker of my DC material," he came closest to realizing the images from my point of view," he felt, overall, that pencils "are the most profound aspect of the work, taking in a genuine skill and some people do it as a high art, but the truth of the matter is that there is nothing equivalent to sitting down to that empty page and making it happen on the page."



**Left (right):** Green Lantern squares off against his Golden Age counterpart, rendered over by the *Guardian of the Universe*, whose large, bald-headed appearance Kane based on Israeli photographer David Ben-Gurion. *Green Lantern* #40, Oct. 1965, inked by Murphy Anderson.

**Figure left and below:**

From the double-page splash in *Green Lantern* #46, and the cover, pencilled and inked by Kane, featuring the alien Green Lantern Corps.



"I WORKED VERY HARD TO MAKE MY FIGURES MORE FLUID," KANE SAID OF HIS **DECADE-LONG** DRAWING RUN ON **GREEN LANTERN**. "I WORKED OBSESSELY TO MAKE MY WORK BETTER," THE **RESULTS** OF WHICH CAN BE SEEN IN THE **BRIEF** STRETCH OF LATER ISSUES KANE INKED **HIMSELF** (#50-57), AND THOSE OF HIS **OTHER** SILVER AGE ICON, **THE ATOM**.

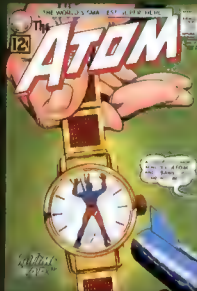


**Cover right:** One of the best of the rare early '60s DC wash covers (theorist Jack Kirby confided over artist's pencils, *Green Lantern* #40, Oct. 1965).

**Right:** Figure from *Green Lantern* #46/Aug. 1966, inked by Anderson. Primitive? Perhaps. Kane meant "primitive" in this sense, when he said, "The one quality I'm always trying to push through in my work is drama and power. Sort of primitive hysteria..."



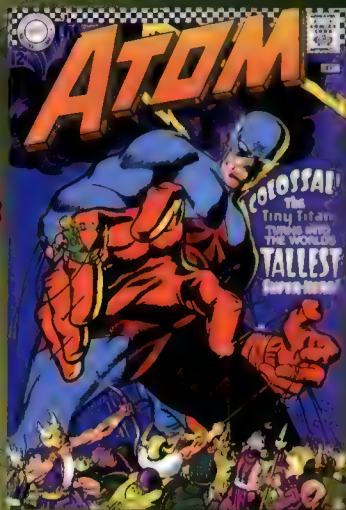




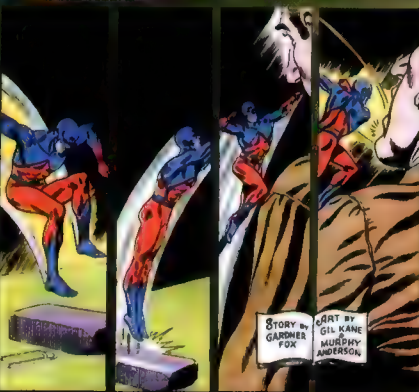
"I CREATED THE ATOM," KANE SAID. "I NEEDED SOME ADDITIONAL WORK WHEN I WAS DOING GREEN LANTERN AND I KNEW DC OWNED (THE NAME) THE ATOM. I ALSO KNEW THAT THEY NOW OWNED THE DOLL MAN TITLE, SO I CREATED A NEW CHARACTER BASED ON THE TWO. I MADE UP A SERIES OF DRAWINGS AND SUBMITTED THEM TO JULIE (SCHWARTZ, EDITOR), WHO SUBMITTED THEM FOR THE FINAL APPROVAL FROM (PUBLISHER) JACKLIEBOWITZ. I GOT THE OK FOR IT, AND THAT WAS IT. WE WERE OFF AND RUNNING."

"ALL I'VE EVER DONE IN MY MIND IS ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND THE FIGURES SO I COULD PRESENT THEM THE MOST GRACEFUL WAY POSSIBLE. "I'M ABOUT BALLET, TRAMPOLINE, AND JUMPING." "THE BALLET OF VIOLENCE, SLIGHTLY ADJUSTED EACH TIME TO MAKE IT SEEM FRESH AND VIBRANT." "THAT'S WHY I LOOK TO BALLET DANCERS AND TRAPEZE ARTISTS FOR MY MOVEMENTS, IN ORDER TO GET THE GRACE AND FLUIDITY OF THEIR ACTIONS AND TO ALSO CAPTURE THE STRENGTH IN THEIR BODIES..."

"THERE IS SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY AND COMPELLING IN THAT MOVEMENT, AND THAT'S WHAT I'VE BROUGHT TO MY COMICS..."



"IT'S HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH GRACEFUL MOVEMENTS THAT POWER MAY LIMIT ME, BUT I'M ALSO INTERESTED IN SHAPE, PATTERN, DESIGN OF PAGE AND PANELS, DEEP SPACE, AND THE RELATION OF EACH PANEL ON THE PAGE TO THE PANELS AROUND IT. THAT IS ESSENTIALLY WHAT I AM INTERESTED IN DOING IN COMICS..."



End Mar 61, Spring 1947 The Atom #2, Nov 1962, inked by Murphy Anderson. Sequence from splash page, The Atom #2, Jan 1963. The next morning Kane mailed the up the news sheet, from the splash page of The Atom #46, Mar 1963, inked by Sid Greene. Sequence above from The Atom #26, Sept. 1960 to Atom, The Atom #12, Sep. 1961, and The Atom #26, Jan. 1963, inked by Anderson.





"O IN A FLAT, TWO-DIMENSIONAL AGE, THERE MUST BE FIGURES COMING AT YOU OR MOVING AWAY FROM YOU. THAT'S WHY I BECAME PREOCCUPIED WITH DEEP SPACE ON THE SIDES, TO INTENSIFY THE SENSE OF DEPTH AS A RESULT, I LIKE TO DO DIAGONAL PANELS." OR DIAGONAL COVERS LIKE THE BATMAN CLASSIC ABOVE, ONE OF THE FEW (IF NOT THE BEST) INSTANCES OF KANE'S MID-'60S GREEN LANTERN/ATOM WORK DURING HIS FIRST TENURE AT DC COMICS.

# PLASTIC MAN

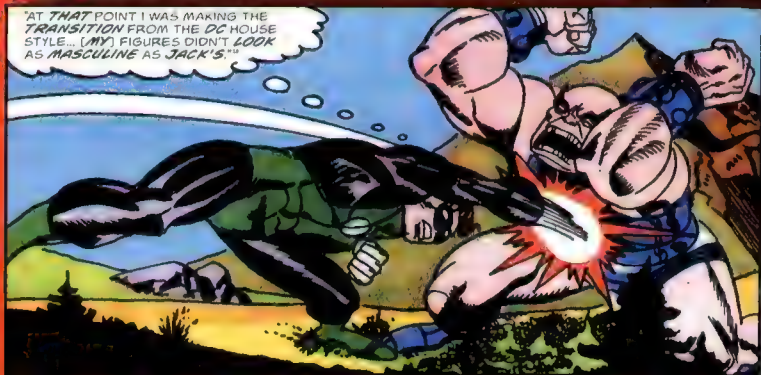
"MORE THAN ANY OTHER ARTIST IN THE FIELD, I'VE PROBABLY DONE A GREATER VARIETY OF FEATURES," KANE SAID. "NOT CARMINE, NOT KUBERT, NOT EVEN JACK KIRBY HAS DONE THE VARIETY OF MATERIAL I'VE DONE."<sup>18</sup>

Source: The cult classic "Plastic Man #1, Dec. 1966 by Kane — his homage to the character's creator, the late Jack Cole. Carmine Infantino said, "Every time we brought back Plastic Man, it wouldn't sell. The reason I think... is because it's too humorous. And the kids wanted their superheroes very straight."



Left: Batman #180, May 1968, inked by Murphy Anderson. Note the resemblance the villain of Bob Kanigher's award-winning "Death Knocks Three Times." Double-kick, how to Double-kick in Arnold Drake's 1967 sketch on page 40.

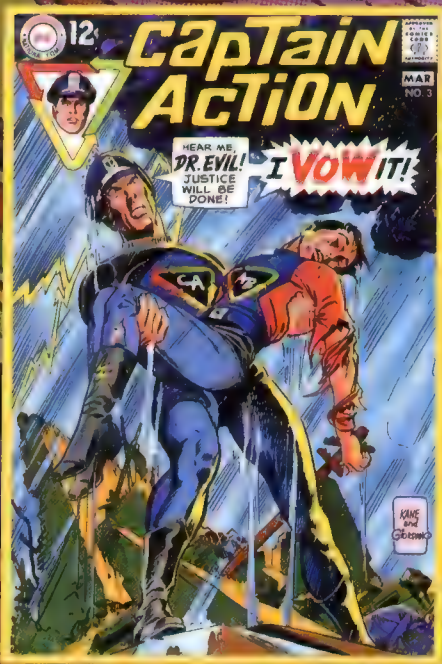




Left page: Top panel: Tales of Suspense #85, Jan. 1967, by Kirby. Middle panel: Green Lantern #63, Jun. 1967, by Kane.

Right page: Cover of The Atom #66, May 1968 by Kane.





**Background:**  
Keanu does Dr. Evil  
from *Captain  
Action* #12, Mar.  
1999, inked by  
Wally Wood.  
"[*Captain Action*]  
was the best  
time of my life,"  
Keanu says.

"THE ONLY GREAT OVER-  
RIDING IDEA I HAD IN EVERY-  
THING... WAS TO INTENSIFY THE  
READING EXPERIENCE IN COMICS."



**Left page:**  
Keanu  
as Dr. Evil  
from *Captain  
Action* #12, Mar.  
1999, inked by  
Wally Wood.  
"[*Captain Action*]  
was the best  
time of my life,"  
Keanu says.

"THAT'S WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED  
TO BRING TO COMICS -- THE COMBINA-  
TION OF THE INTERNALIZATION OF CHARACTERS THAT PROSE  
CAN IMPLY, AND THE EXCITEMENT THAT PICTURES CAN SHOW. I WANT  
TO AFFECT THE READER IN THE SAME WAY THAT I HAVE BEEN AFFECTED  
BY ART IN THE PAST."

"MY WHOLE LIFE IS A FIGHT TO CONTROL AND DIRECT MY EMOTIONS TO GET  
AS MUCH OUT OF THEM AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO DO THAT I USE THE FACILITIES  
OF COMICS, NOT AS ENDS IN THEMSELVES, BUT AS TOOLS."

"THE ONLY THING I WANTED TO EXPRESS ESSENTIALLY WAS THE SENTIMENTAL FALL  
WITH GRACE AND POWER, AND I TRIED TO DO THAT WITH EVERY DRAWING I EVER DID."

"ONCE I DEVELOPED A TECHNIQUE... I BEGAN TO  
ACHIEVE MY END. FIRST WAS TO CREATE  
INTERESTING COMPOSITIONS AND TO BE ABLE TO  
DESIGN THE PAGE TO BE ABLE TO ARTICULATE FIG-  
URES WITH FORCE AND POWER... THEN IT BECAME  
IMPORTANT TO ME TO INFLUENCE THE MATERIAL  
I WAS DOING AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE."

"AT EVERY COMPANY I WORKED FOR, WAS  
INSISTENT ENOUGH... TO GET THE FEATURES THAT  
MOST SATISFIED MY IMMEDIATE NEED."

"I DID A SERIES OF BOOKS (FOR DC) CALLED  
CAPTAIN ACTION. AFTER THE FIRST TWO BOOKS,  
I WROTE THE REST OF THEM MYSELF. I LOVED  
THEM... JULIE (SCHWARTZ) SAID IT WAS THE BEST  
STUFF HE EVER READ IN COMICS."





# JOE KUBERT

**A** LONG WITH HIS CONTEMPORARIES, GARMINE INFANTINO, AND GIL KANE, JOE KUBERT ENTERED THE COMIC BOOK FIELD IN THE 1940s AS A TEENAGER DRAWING FOR DC COMICS, THEN WENT ON TO BECOME ONE OF THE GIANTS OF THE MEDIUM, AN ARTIST WHOSE *STYLE IS UNMISTAKABLE*—AND *UNFORGETTABLE*. THE MOST *EXPRESSIVE* PEN-AND-BRUSH COMIC BOOK ARTIST OF HIS GENERATION, KUBERT'S NAME AND *STYLE* BECAME *SYNONYMOUS* WITH *WAR* COMICS DURING THE *SILVER AGE* BECAUSE OF YEARS OF SERVICE DRAWING WORLD WAR II HEROIC AMERICAN *BOY*, *ROCK*, AND, THEN LATER, THE OFFBEAT *ANTHERO*, WORLD WAR GERMAN FLYER *ENEMY AGE*, BOTH BECAME *SIGNATURE* CHARACTERS. KUBERT'S *GRITTY* PEN LINE AND *BOLD* BRUSHWORK *PERFECTLY* SUITED WRITER AND EDITOR BOB KANIGER'S EMOTIONALLY *WRENCHING* WRITING. "SOME PEOPLE HAVE ASKED ME IF THE *WAR* STUFF WAS MATERIAL I ESPECIALLY *LIKED* DOING," KUBERT SAYS, "AND MY ANSWER HAS BEEN *NO*. IT *WASN'T*. BOB HAD AN *OPENING* HE NEEDED *WAR* STORIES, AND HE ASKED ME IF I COULD DO IT. I SAID *SURE*, GIVE ME *ANY* SUBJECT MATTER AND I'LL *DRAW* IT. IT *WASN'T* BECAUSE I HAD ANY PARTICULAR *FEELING* FOR IT—I PUT AS *MUCH* EFFORT INTO DOING IT AS I WOULD IN *ANY* KIND OF STORY."

EVEN *SUPERHERO* STORIES. IN THE EARLY 1960s, KUBERT MAINTAINED CONTINUITY WITH HIS 1940s ROOTS BY RETURNING TO *HAWKMAN*, A CHARACTER RENDERED BY *MANY* ARTISTS SINCE, BUT GIVEN HIS MOST *DEFINITIVE* TREATMENT BY KUBERT. DESPITE A *BRIEF* RUN OF ONLY *SIX* ISSUES, WHAT *ACCOUNTS* FOR KUBERT'S LASTING *POPULARITY* AND *LEGEND-IN-HIS-OWN-TIME* STATUS? "I HAPPEN TO *LOVE* TO DRAW, AND I HAPPEN TO *LOVE* TO DRAW *COMIC BOOKS*. I ENJOY IT AS *MUCH* *NOW*, PROBABLY *MORE*, THAN I DID BEFORE."





"ONE OF THE TURNING POINTS IN MY CAREER CAME IN THE YEAR 1945, WHEN SHELDON MAYER, THEN EDITOR OF FLASH COMICS, GAVE ME THE CHANCE TO DRAW THE HAWKMAN STRIP." KUBERT WROTE IN THE LETTER COLUMN OF THE MAY, 1961 ISSUE OF DC'S BRAVE & BOLD TITLE THAT BROUGHT HAWKMAN INTO THE SILVER AGE.

"ANY OF YOU WHO HAVE READ AND ENJOYED HAWKMAN VINTAGE 1945 CAN IMAGINE THE THRILL AND SATISFACTION I DERIVED COMING BACK TO THE CHARACTER I DREW FIFTEEN YEARS AGO! IT'S LIKE SAYING HELLO TO AN OLD FRIEND, WHO, RATHER THAN AGING DURING THE PAST YEARS, HAS GROWN YOUNGER, STRONGER, AND MORE ADVENTUROUS THAN EVER." LIKE KUBERT'S STYLE ITSELF, WHICH WENT FROM ONE TYPICAL OF MANY GOLDEN AGE COMIC BOOK ARTISTS ("THE DISTORTIONS AND THE BAD DRAWING," KUBERT SAID IN 2003), TO ONE OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHABLE STYLES IN THE HISTORY OF COMIC BOOK ART.

Upper left: Flash Comics #71, May 1946.  
Center: Brave & Bold #36, Jul. 1961.  
Bottom: Brave & Bold #82, Jul. 1968.



"Wrote Kubert, "I believe Hawkman will benefit from my experience of two decades in the weekly book business. I feel I can apply things I couldn't even dream of 15 years ago." In black and white, like those aforementioned panels (above and below, from Brave & Bold #36, Mar. 1961), or color, like the cover (left, Brave & Bold #66, Nov. 1962), done in wash. "I did the washy what Josh Acker (DC colorist) did was retain that effect by being able to reproduce it at a cost that made it viable to put out."



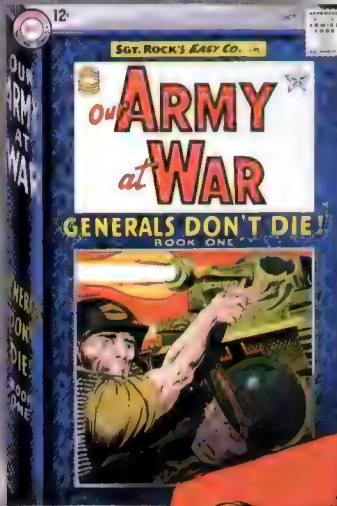
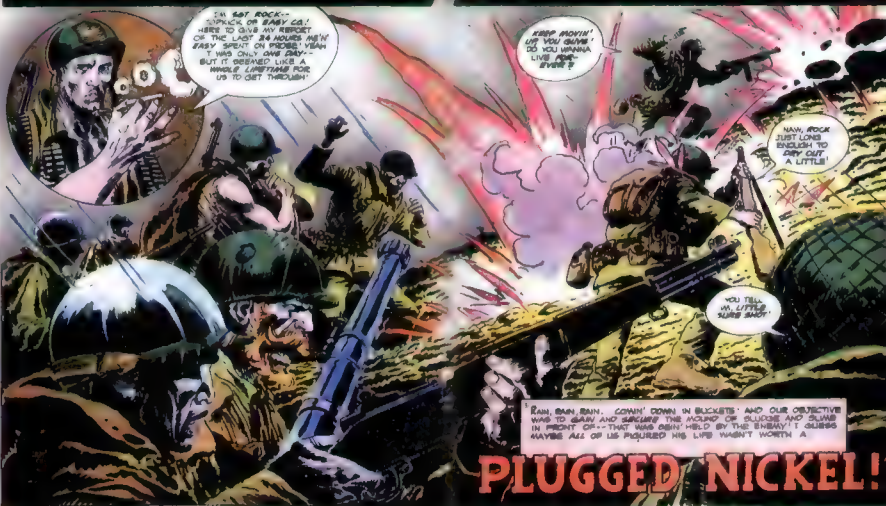
ARMED WITH A WEAPON OF THE PAST, THE WINGED WONDER BATTLES AGAINST WEAPONS OF THE FUTURE... IN... "THE MEN WHO MARRIED THE MONSTER!"



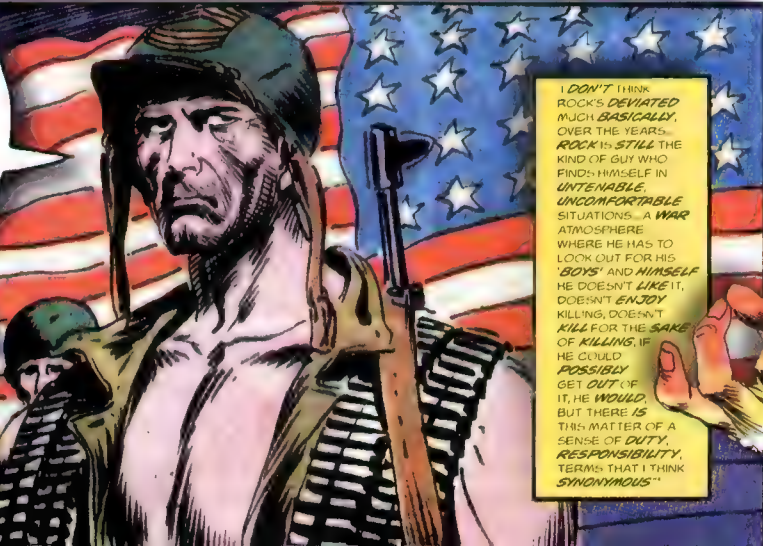
"ALL THIS WORK IS NOT THE PRODUCT OF ONE PERSON AT ALL," KUBERT SAID. "SGT. ROCK WAS STRICTLY BOB KANIGHER'S IDEA TO BEGIN WITH, AND ALL I WAS DOING WAS ILLUSTRATING SOME VERY EXCELLENT STORIES."

# SGT. ROCK OF EASY CO.

"SGT. ROCK IS A HELL OF A LOT MORE OF HIM (KANIGHER) THAN IT IS OF ME... I START WITH A SCRIPT, THE WRITER STARTS WITH AN ABSOLUTELY BLANK PAGE. KANIGHER IS A GREAT WRITER, HE DID SOME STUFF THAT, FOR ME, WAS INSPIRATIONAL."



"I FELT AS DID BOB THAT ROCK HAD TO BE A VET, WHICH MEANT THAT HE HAD TO BE AN OLDER KIND OF GUY, A FATHER FIGURE TO THOSE WHO CAME IN UNDER HIM. IT'S HARD TO SAY HOW HE WAS DEVELOPED. I DRAW, AS BOB COMMENTS, BY THE SEAT OF MY PANTS. I HAVE TO FEEL THE THING INTUITIVELY."



I DON'T THINK ROCK'S DEVIATED MUCH BASICALLY, OVER THE YEARS. ROCK IS STILL THE KIND OF GUY WHO FINDS HIMSELF IN UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATIONS - A WAR ATMOSPHERE WHERE HE HAS TO LOOK OUT FOR HIS 'BOYS' AND HIMSELF. HE DOESN'T LIKE IT, DOESN'T ENJOY KILLING, DOESN'T KILL FOR THE SAKE OF KILLING. IF HE COULD POSSIBLY GET OUT OF IT, HE WOULD. BUT THERE IS THIS MATTER OF A SENSE OF DUTY, RESPONSIBILITY, TERMS THAT I THINK SYNCHRONOUS."

All Sgt. Rock art appeared in *Our Army at War* comics, written by Bob Kanigher. Clockwise from upper left: Cover: Issue #112, Nov. 1961. Spread: Cover: Issue #198, Oct. 1968. Cover: Issue #147, Oct. 1964. It's a comic book; one of many Kubert designs that broke the "fourth wall" in comic book covers. Bottom montage left and right: Issue #196, Aug. 1968. "Illustrating or writing stories of any other conflict seems not to have the feasibility or credibility that the World War II stories have," Kubert said. "It seems that the most talented were like Remm or Williamson are not acceptable reading matter. They are just too current, I guess. I can't pinpoint the reason for it, but sales were lousy on any book featuring that material."









"BOB DID A LOT OF READING AND RE-SEARCH WORK, ESPECIALLY CONCERNING FLYING AND THE KINDS OF BATTLES THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE AIR. THE TACTICS USED, THE DOGFIGHTS, THAT WAS IMPORTANT, SO THE STORIES WOULD BE CREDIBLE. BOB MUST HAVE HAD A LOT OF FUN FIGURING OUT THE SITUATIONS THE PLANES WOULD BE INVOLVED IN, HOW THE PILOTS FELT, THEIR REACTIONS, AND HE COMMUNICATED THEM TO ME, AND FIRED ME UP."<sup>11</sup>

"I GOT A LOT OF REFERENCE ON WORLD WAR I AIR WARFARE AND BARON VON RICHTOFEN A.K.A. ENEMY ACE. ON THE AIRPLANES, WHAT I TRIED FOR WAS A FEELING OF WHAT I HAD READ AND SEEN. I READ A GOODLY NUMBER OF HISTORICAL PIECES ON THE REAL RED BARON. I GOT A WHOLE BUNCH OF MATERIAL ON WORLD WAR I PLANES, BOTH CONSTRUCTION AND PERFORMANCE-WISE. I TRIED TO GET A FEEL FOR THESE LITTLE AIRPLANES THAT WERE PUT TOGETHER WITH WOOD AND PAPER AND WIRE AND STRING."<sup>12</sup>

Right page: Splash page of Issue #138, May 1968.



"BOB IS GIFTED WITH THE ABILITY TO WRITE IN SUCH A WAY THAT HE CREATES PICTURES AS HE WRITES, AND HE HAS ALWAYS HAD THE ABILITY, WHEN HE DESCRIBES A STORY VERBALLY TO ME, TO ACTUALLY PUT THOSE PICTURES IN MY MIND."

"I CAN SEE EVERY DETAIL OF THE PICTURES HE'S TELLING ME ABOUT. I CAN SEE MORE THAN WHAT HE IS DESCRIBING TO ME."

(JOE HUBER)

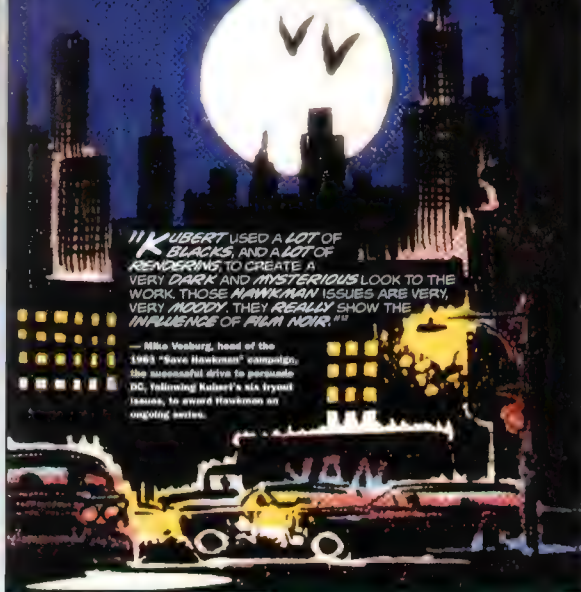
This page: Issue #143, Mar. 1969. "I didn't color any of these. Tatjana Wood was the colorist and she did an absolutely incredible job. Wonderful sense of color, and not only that, but a wonderful sense of what I was trying to do."



**"WORKING WITH BOB KANIGHER WAS A CONSTANT CHALLENGE. AN INVIGORATING, REWARDING CHALLENGE. BOB'S STORIES TURNED AND MOVED ON THE EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTERS INVOLVED. THAT, THEN, CAUSED THE ARTIST TO PLUMB THE DEPTHS OF HIS CONCENTRATION TO CREATE A GRAPHIC RESPONSE TO BOB'S TEXT."**

**“KUBERT USED A LOT OF  
BLACKS, AND A LOT OF  
RENDERING, TO CREATE A  
VERY DARK AND MYSTERIOUS LOOK TO  
THE WORK. THOSE *MANHATTAN* ISSUES ARE VERY,  
VERY MOODY. THEY REALLY SHOW THE  
INFLUENCE OF FILM NOIR.”**

— Mike Venezia, head of the  
1983 “Save Hawkman” campaign,  
the successful drive to persuade  
DC, following Kubert’s six tryout  
issues, to award Hawkman an  
ongoing series.



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WHEN I WAS  
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ACTER SO THAT  
WOULD BE LOG  
NICAL WITH  
A TAG HAND  
FROM LEVEL  
THAT I COULD  
BE RESPONSIBLE  
FROM THE BACK  
WALKING AWAY  
FOR THAT THE  
ARTIST REALLY  
HAS TO GET TO  
KNOW THAT CHAR  
ACTER AND GIVE  
THAT CHARACTER  
A HISTORY AND  
A LIFE SO THAT HE  
CAN FEEL HOW  
THAT CHARACTER  
SHOULD MOVE HOW  
HE SHOULD LIVE  
AND WHAT HIS  
BODY LANGUAGE  
WOULD BE

EVEN THE  
MOON SEEMS  
BEAT-SNAGGIN'  
ITSELF ON  
THE TREETOPS!

"I ALWAYS FELT I HAD HAD A GREAT DEAL OF FREEDOM IN ILLUSTRATING BOB'S STORIES, AND HE CONSTANTLY PUSHED ME TO TEST MYSELF, IN TERMS OF DESIGN, STORYTELLING AND CHARACTER IDENTIFICATION. HE CAUSED ME TO LOOK MORE CLOSELY AT THINGS."

"PEOPLE ARE NOT JUST 'PEOPLE,' I DISCOVERED. THEY STAND IN DIFFERENT POSTURES, WALK DIFFERENTLY, EXPRESS THEMSELVES WITH DIFFERENT MANNERISMS. THESE WERE THE ELEMENTS I TRIED TO INTRODUCE IN MY DRAWINGS TO MAKE MY CHARACTERS BELIEVABLE."

"PEOPLE ARE NOT JUST 'PEOPLE,' I DISCOVERED. THEY STAND IN DIFFERENT POSTURES, WALK DIFFERENTLY, EXPRESS THEMSELVES WITH DIFFERENT MANNERISMS. THESE WERE THE ELEMENTS I TRIED TO INTRODUCE IN MY DRAWINGS TO MAKE MY CHARACTERS BELIEVABLE."

**"FROM HIS PEN CAME THE SOUND AND THE FURY, THE LONELINESS, THE SILENCE, THE EXHAUSTION, THE PITY AND THE PITILESS, THE POETRY AND THE RUD, BLACK AND WHITE MORE ELOQUENT THAN ERUPTING BLOOD IT WAS A MIRACLE ... CALLED JOE KUBERT."**  
 -- BOB KANIGHER





# Gene Colan

**G**ENE COLAN LABORED IN THE TRENCHES OF THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY FOR YEARS, DRAWING *WAR* AND *ROMANCE* COMICS, BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL HIS ARRIVAL AT MARVEL IN 1965, DRAWING THE UNDERWATER HERO PRINCE NAMOR, *THE SUB-MARINER*, THAT COLAN'S STARS ASCENDED. HIS FIGURES, *GRACEFUL* YET *POWERFUL*, WERE *PERFECT* FOR AN ATHLETIC SWIMMING HERO, AND GAVE THE CHARACTER A *REGAL* AURA THAT SUITED HIS *TITLE*. ALONG WITH HIS CONTEMPORARIES, *JOHN BUSCEMA* AND *JOHN ROMITA*, COLAN WAS ONE OF THE *FIRST* MARVEL ARTISTS TO *BREAK AWAY* FROM THE *KIRBY* LOOK (BUT ONLY AFTER FIRST ASSIMILATING HIS DYNAMICS INTO THEIR OWN) WHICH WAS THE COMPANY'S DE FACTO *HOUSE STYLE* DURING *THE SILVER AGE*.

ORIGINALLY *DESIGNED* BY *KIRBY*, AS A BULKY GOLDEN ROBOT, *REDESIGNED* BY *STEVE DITKO* WITH THE NOW-FAMILIAR RED AND GOLD ARMOR AND ILLUSTRATED BY OTHER MARVEL ARTISTS LIKE *DON HECK*, MARVEL'S *IRON MAN* WAS GIVEN TO *COLAN* IN 1968. COLAN COMMENTED, "THE ONLY *PROBLEM* I HAD IN THE *BEGINNING* WAS GETTING AN *EXPRESSION* ON HIS *FACE*. I WANTED THE READER TO *FEEL* HIS *EMOTION* AT TIMES, NOT JUST BE A METAL FIGURE ALWAYS LOOKING THE *SAME*. SO I TOOK SOME *POETIC LICENSE*. I TRIED NOT TO *OVERDO* IT -- AFTER ALL, IT IS MADE OF *METAL*. I TRIED TO BE VERY *SUBTLE* WITH IT, ADD A LITTLE *HUMANITY* TO THE *FACE*," BY TURNING THE CHARACTER'S *MUTE* HELMET INTO A *MASK* OF *TRAGEDY*, IMBUING HIM WITH THE *FEELINGS* OF A MAN *TRAPPED* IN A *PRISON* OF ARMOR, COLAN FOREVER *OWNED* IRON MAN.

THIS *QUALITY* OF BRINGING TO SUPERHEROES A *REALISTIC*, *HUMAN* SIDE MADE COLAN *PERFECT* FOR THE *NASCENT* MARVEL *STYLE* OF HEROIC -- YET SOMEWHAT *TRAGIC* -- PROTAGONISTS. THE *BLIND* HERO *CHARLIE EVIL* AFTER A *ROUND-ROBIN* OF ARTISTS, *BLOSSOMED* UNDER COLAN'S STEWARDSHIP BECAUSE COLAN *CONVINCINGLY* DEPICTED THE *SWASH-BUCKLING* SIDE OF THE CHARACTER AS WELL AS HIS *QUINMAN* ALTER EGO.

AND THOUGH COLAN *TOO*, LIKE ROMITA, HAD TO FOLLOW *DITKO* -- BUT ON *DR. STRANGE*, DITKO'S OTHER FLAGSHIP CREATION -- COLAN WAS NOT *INTIMIDATED*. HIS *STRANGE* *STORIES*, DRAWN IN *CHAMBERSCURD* SHADINGS, WITH PANEL LAYOUTS AND COMPOSITIONS THAT *WENDED* AND *WARPED* THEIR WAY THROUGH THE PAGE, BEFITTED THE *ECSTOPLASMIC*, OTHERWORLDLY *DIMENSIONS* THEY WERE SET IN. THAT HIS VISION OF THE OCCULT CHARACTER HOLDS ITS *OWNY* AGAINST *DITKO'S* TO THIS DAY IS A *TESTAMENT* TO COLAN'S *ATMOSPHERIC* STYLE, ONE OF THE MOST *UNIQUE* IN THE *HISTORY* OF COMIC BOOK ART.



REIGNING  
OVER THE  
OF THE  
SUB-MARINER

Subash (no pun intended) made from  
Colan's first issue, *Tales of Suspense* #70,  
Aug. 1963, written by Stan Lee, illustrated by  
Vince Colletta.

Subash's design: From Colan's first  
cover, *Tales of Suspense* #71, Dec. 1963,  
written by Stan Lee, illustrated by Vince Colletta.  
The Subash was created as a more realistic  
side of the character. It's sort of a science fiction,  
and I never thought that science fiction  
was my cup of tea.

Detail from the  
cover of *Tales of  
Suspense* #70,  
Jul. 1966, inked  
by Jack Abel.



"I ALWAYS WANTED TO DO A FEATURE  
WHETHER IT WAS DR. STRANGE OR  
DAREDEVIL OR ANY OF THEM.  
A CHARACTER I COULD  
CONSTANTLY WORK WITH AND  
LIVE WITH AND CHANGE AS  
TIME WENT ON, AND IMPROVE  
ON." COLAN FINALLY GOT HIS CHANCE  
WHEN HE MADE HIS MARVEL DEBUT  
(UNDER THE PSEUDONYM  
ADAM JUSTIN) ON  
THE SUB-MARINER

"I DIDN'T LIKE SUPER-  
HEROES BECAUSE THEY  
WEREN'T REAL LIFE.  
I WANT TO DRAW REAL  
LIFE AND REAL  
PEOPLE. HOWEVER,  
I WILL DRAW SUPER-  
HEROES BECAUSE  
IT'S THE BREAD  
AND BUTTER OF  
THE INDUSTRY.  
EVERYONE IN  
COMICS HAS TO DO  
THEM SOME TIME, AND  
YOU CAN TELL WHEN AN  
ARTIST LIKES THEM,  
LIKE JACK KIRBY."

Left: Detail from the cover of *Tales of  
Suspense* #207, Jun. 1969, inked by Jack  
Abel. "Over a period of time," Colan said,  
"I began to draw Sub-Mariner a little bit  
differently, a little bit better, to give him  
a more realistic look; that's beginning to  
show in this image. But no matter what I  
did, I just couldn't get him to look the  
way I really wanted him to look. I wanted  
him to look good-looking, but he could  
never look good-looking; his head is flat.  
And once I put that flat head in there, I  
couldn't get the rest of him right—he  
was so off-balance to me." Right: Full-  
page panel from *Tales of Suspense*  
#86, Feb. 1967, inked by Frank  
Gleason. Inset: Iron Man #1,  
May 1968, inked by Gleason.



KRAKK!

THIS FULL-  
PAGE PANEL  
BY COLAN.

...SHOWS HIS  
KIRBY  
INFLUENCE

"BEFORE I EVEN  
GOT INTO COMICS,  
I WAS COPYING  
KIRBY'S WORK..."

HE SHOWED A LOT OF  
POWER. IT WASN'T JUST  
SOMEBODY KNOCKING  
DOWN A WALL, BUT ALL  
THE BRICKS WERE FLY-  
ING AT THE READER  
INCLUDING THE FIST!

KIRBY HAD SUCH POWER  
BEHIND EVERYTHING HE  
DIDN'T TAKE THAT PART  
OF JACK'S STYLE AND PUT  
IT INTO MY OWN WORK!

THE INVINCIBLE  
IRON MAN





"I THINK DAREDEVIL WAS MY FAVORITE STRIP... IT WAS A GOOD TRAINING GROUND."

"I TRIED TO GET THAT MOVEMENT INTO IT. NOT JUST SHOW ONE FIGURE SOMERSAULTING WITH SPEED LINES BEHIND..."

"... BUT MULTIPLE IMAGES OF HIM, LIKE A CAMERA MIGHT CAPTURE HIM."

"I HAVE A COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE BODY, LIKE DIVERS DIVING OFF A PLATFORM... YOU KNOW THEY TWIST AND THEY TURN UNTIL THEY HIT THE WATER. THE KIND OF THING THAT DAREDEVIL MIGHT DO."

"I WANTED THE READER TO FEEL THE HEIGHT TO BEGIN WITH... BUT THE AEROBATICS WERE ALWAYS HARD TO FIGURE OUT. I TRIED NOT TO REPEAT MYSELF."

"I TRY TO BLUR THE SCENE VERY OFTEN. I STILL HAVE SPEED LINES, BUT... THE DRAWING HAS A BLURRED LOOK. THE TRAIL OF THE IMAGE BEHIND IT SEVERAL TIMES."

"SO THAT IF YOUR EYE IS SCANNING IT MAY ALMOST LOOK A LITTLE BIT LIKE IT'S MOVING."

"I LOVED DOING DAREDEVIL. I DID HIM THE LONGEST. I MADE HIM MY OWN. IT WAS A GREAT MARRIAGE BETWEEN THE CHARACTER AND MYSELF."

"I REMEMBER I WANTED TO CHANGE HIS COSTUME TO MAKE IT BLACK, JUST WITH LITTLE SPOTS OF RED SHOWING THROUGH IT, BUT STAN WANTED ME TO LEAVE IT OPEN FOR COLOR, WHICH I THOUGHT LOST THE DYNAMICS OF THE CHARACTER. MADE HIM LOOK ALMOST WEIGHTLESS."

This page, above: Daredevil #43, Jun. 1966, inked by John Tartaglione. This page, below: Daredevil #60, 1966, inked by Colletta. Center figures: Splash page from Daredevil #26, Mar. 1967, ink uncredited. Opposite page, above: Daredevil #27, Apr. 1967, inked by Tartaglione. Opposite page, below: Detail from the cover of Daredevil #25, Feb. 1967, inked by Frank Giacoia.



LOVED DOING DR. STRANGE BECAUSE THAT WAS DURING THE PSYCHEDELIC YEARS.



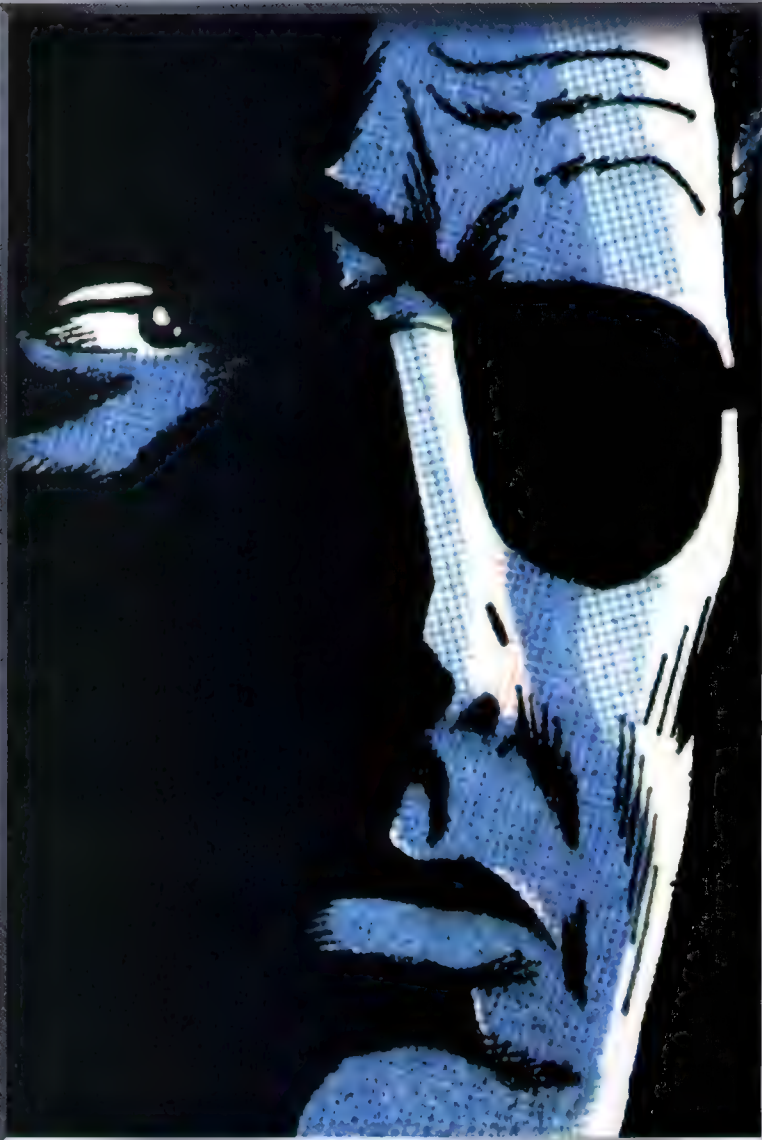
"I TRULY BELIEVE THE HANDFUL OF ISSUES OF DR. STRANGE THAT GENE AND I TURNED OUT IN 1968-69 TO BE ONE OF A MERE HANDFUL OF PERIODS WHEN THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS WAS AT AN ALL-TIME ARTISTIC PEAK."

—Ray Thomas, writer/associate editor



Detail from the cover of Dr. Strange #177, inked by Palmer. This was the debut of the blue-faced (not masked), superhero version of Dr. Strange, which writer/associate editor Ray Thomas had Colan design in an unsuccessful attempt to boost sales. The last issue was #183, Nov. 1969.





# STERANKO

**J**IM STERANKO HAS WORN MANY HATS IN HIS CAREER -- ARTIST, AUTHOR, ILLUSTRATOR, ART DIRECTOR, DESIGNER, ENTERTAINER -- BUT HE WORE THEM ALL AT ONCE WHEN HE PUT ON QUITE A SHOW AT MARVEL COMICS AT THE END OF THE SILVER AGE. IT BEGAN IN 1966 WHEN, AS A VIRTUAL UNKNOWN, HE WAS HANDING COMPLETE CONTROL OF A SECOND-STRIKE CHARACTER FROM KIRBY, THE JAMES BOND-KNOCKOFF WICK FURY, AGENT OF SHIELD. HE PROMPTLY USED FURY AS AN UNLIKELY LAUNCHING PAD FOR HIS TRULY METEORIC RISE TO PROMINENCE.

STERANKO INVESTED THE 8-PAGE FEATURE WITH A STARTLING ARRAY OF CINEMATIC AND STAGE STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES, WEDDED TO THE ASCENDANT KIRBY/MARVEL STYLE OF IN-YOUR-FACE POWER. THE COMBINATION WAS AN EXPLOSION OF ALCHEMICAL PROPORTIONS, AND IT BLEW THE FIELD WIDE OPEN. EACH ISSUE, IN DEED, EACH PAGE OF STERANKO'S MARVEL WORKS -- INCLUDING A STUNNING TRILOGY OF CAPTAIN AMERICA STORIES -- WAS A SUPERCHARGED SURPRISE, AS STERANKO RELENTLESSLY ICONOCLASTICALLY EXPERIMENTED WITH MIXED MEDIA APPLICATIONS, FUSING A GRAPHIC DESIGNER'S WITH AN ILLUSTRATOR'S APPROACH TO THE MEDIUM OF SEQUENTIAL STORYTELLING.

STERANKO WROTE HIS OWN MATERIAL AS WELL. WHEN HIS ARTWORK AND HIS STORIES APPEARED IN MARVEL COMICS, STAN LEE SAID OF STERANKO, "IT WAS LIKE HE BURST ON THE SCENE LIKE A SKYROCKET! HE WAS IMMEDIATELY THE CENTER OF ATTENTION OF ARTISTS AND WRITERS AND THE FANS. LIKE JIM STERANKO, SUPERSTAR HE CAME, SAW, AND CONQUERED. BY 1970, HE HAD LEFT THE MAINSTREAM COMIC BOOK WORLD TO CONQUER OTHERS."

HIS INFLUENCE ON THE FIELD TODAY IS IN CONVERSE PROPORTION TO THE RELATIVELY SMALL BODY OF WORK HE PRODUCED FOR MARVEL COMICS BETWEEN 1966 AND 1970. LOOKING BACK ON THAT WORK, STERANKO REMARKED, SOMEWHAT RHETORICALLY, "AFTER YOUR FIFTY OR SIXTY YEARS ARE UP, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LOOK BACK AND SEE THE OUTPUT THAT YOU'VE DONE THAT WILL ENDURE LONG AFTER YOU'RE GONE, AND WILL CONTINUE TO FILL THE MINDS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE."

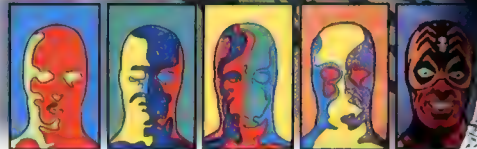




"IT SEEMED TO BE SOMETHING THAT WAS A NATURAL FOR ME. SOMETHING I COULD PROJECT MY PERSONALITY INTO..."

"WHEN I TOOK SHIELD ON, JIM STERANO SAID, 'FURY WAS SIMPLY AN OLDER VERSION OF HIS MARTINE PERSONA.' I FURNISHED 'CIGAR-CHOMPING, UNRAVENED, I CLEANED HIM UP, GAVE HIM THE KINKY, BLACK LEATHER ZIP-SUIT RIFFLING WITH CLIPS, BUTTONS, CARTRIDGE BELTS, AND THE SHOULDER HOLSTER -- SO HE COULD COM PETE VISUALLY WITH MARVEL'S SUPER-HEROES. I GAVE HIM A 'PERSON'-LITY AND SEX LIFE. I STRESSED AN EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH TO COMIC STORY-TELLING. THE SHIELD STRIP LENT ITSELF WELL TO THAT SORT OF THING, PACKED TO THE PANEL RULES WITH GIMMICKS AND GADGETS."

"BUT WHATEVER I MAD EXPERIMENT I ATTEMPTED, MY FIRST THOUGHT WAS TO ENTERTAIN..."



Inserts above: The Richard Avedon-inspired psychedelic portrait of arch-villain George, from SHIELD #5, Oct. 1968, inked by John Tartaglione. Figure, far left: Strange Tales #136, Mar. 1968, inked by Leo Sinnott. Figure, right: Val Fury's love interest from Strange Tales #158, May 1968, inked by Sinnott. Background: SHIELD #1, Jun. 1968, inked by Sinnott.

Left: Strange Tales #136, Aug. 1965, the debut of Leo and Kirby's Top-Gun/James Bond amalgam, Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. Steranko said, "It was one of my favorite books, before I came into the comic book business, when it first came out and Kirby did it. I learned subtlety and style at the Kirby School of Art, then plowed ahead with my own primitive amalgam..."

"MY STUFF CAME OUT LOOKING NOT LIKE A MARVEL BOOK, NOT IN THE MARVEL FORMULA, BUT IN MY OWN WAY"





Below: Splash page to *The Spirit*, July 13, 1947, "Fairy Tales for Delinquents." Right: Splash page to "Dark Moon Rising, Hell Hound Kill!" in *SHIELD* #3, Aug. 1968, inked by Dan Adkins.



This adaptation has the approval of the Whitworth Foundation & Co. and is heartily endorsed by the publisher John F. Cross who has just signed a long term contract with the publisher.

STERANKO'S BREAKTHROUGH IMPACT CAN BE PARTLY ATTRIBUTED TO HIS RESURRECTING GRAPHIC DESIGNS AND DEVICES FROM THE PRIMER OF COMIC BOOK STORY-TELLING, WILL EISNER'S MASTERPIECE, *THE SPIRIT* (1940-52), LESSONS THAT, BY 1966, HAD LARGELY BEEN FORGOTTEN BY THE MAINSTREAM. EISNER SAID OF STERANKO: "I DISCOVERED WE HAD A SOMEWHAT PARALLEL PHILOSOPHY ABOUT THE COMIC MEDIUM WE BOTH HAVE A RESPECT FOR THE ROLE OF ART IN THE NARRATIVE PROCESS."



Above: Splash page to *The Spirit*, Jun. 6, 1948, "The Guilty Gun." Right: Splash page to *SHIELD* #5, Oct. 1968, inked by John Tartaglione. Steranko said, "Even if the title is 'Whatever Happened to Scorpio?' there are things in that story that bear my own philosophies out."



NICK FURY DINES THE NEW WORLD AS HE UNRAVELS THE MYSTERY OF THE MOON IN CLOUTIER'S SCENE. STERANKO'S MASTERPIECE: JOHN TARTAGLIONE



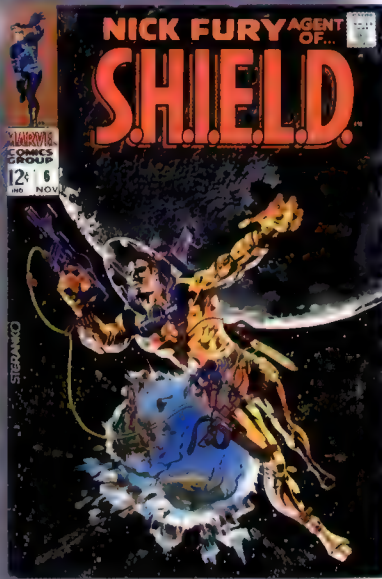
Architecture. Below: Splash page to *The Spirit*, Feb. 22, 1948. Right: *SHIELD* #1, Jun. 1968. Of his *SHIELD* run Steranko said, "I tried to make every one of them different... every one of the *SHIELD* books was going to take on a different problem, completely different than the other ones."



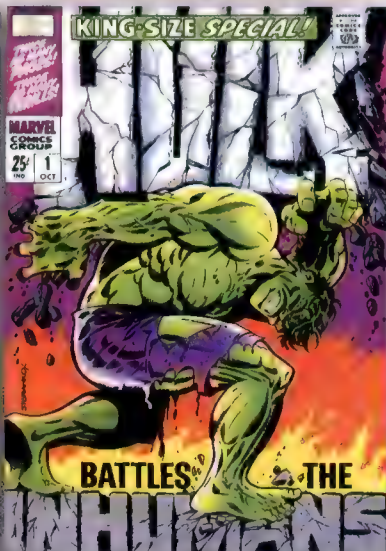
YET STERANKO SAID "I'VE NEVER THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS AN ARTIST, AND AM CERTAINLY NOT IN THE SAME LEAGUE AS SUCH DRAFTSMEN AS AL WILLIAMSON, ALEX TOTH, WALLY WOOD, REED CRANDALL, NEAL ADAMS OR JOHN BUSCEMA. MY INTEREST IS IN THE ARCHITECTURE AND MECHANICS OF STORYTELLING."



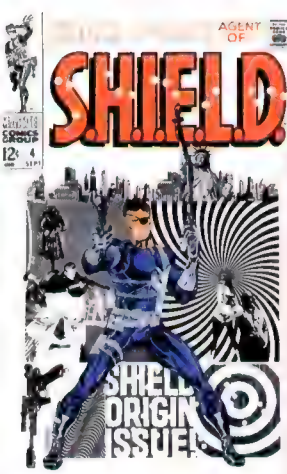
Mechanics: Above: EC's *Incredible Science Fiction* #12, May 1964, by Wally Wood, one of Steranko's art heroes, to whom he paid homage with his cover (right) to *SHIELD* #6, Nov. 1968.







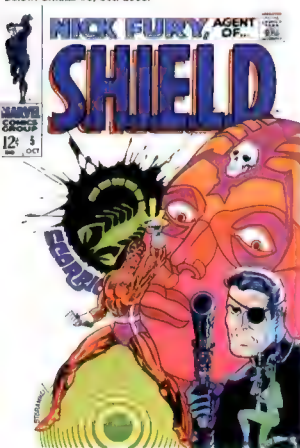




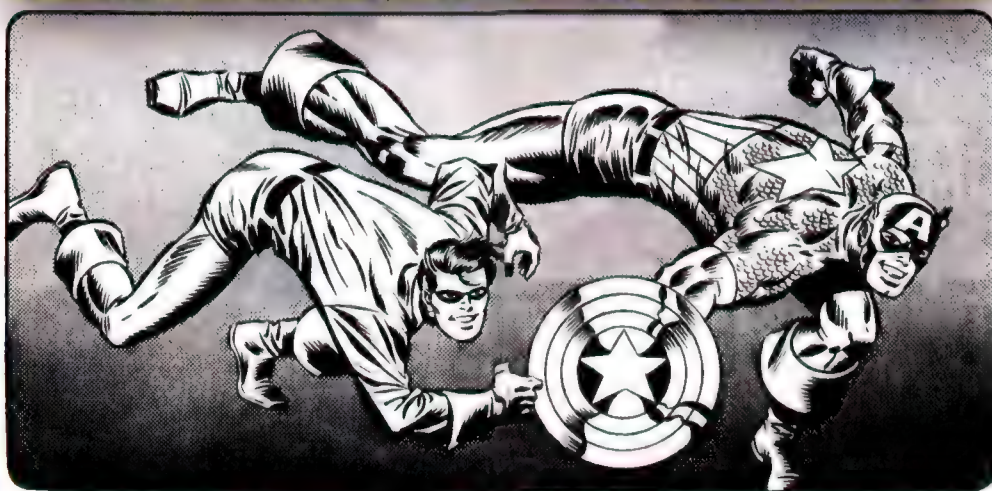
Above: SHIELD #4, Sep. 1968.

“I WANTED TO EXPLORE THE PSYCHEDELIC ART OF THE 1960S. I WANTED TO EXPERIMENT WITH SURREALISTIC AND TYPOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS. I WANTED TO ENHANCE THE GRAPHIC DESIGN OF THE COVER, ESPECIALLY THE COVERS THAT WERE MISSING THE MAIN PART OF THE TIME AND ILLUSTRATION. I WANTED TO ENHANCE THE KINETIC DYNAMISM INHERENT IN THE COVER.”

Below: SHIELD #8, Oct. 1968.



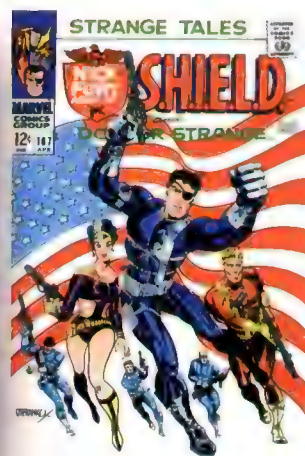
“IF REALITY CAN BE SYMBOLIZED BY COLOR, THEN THE UNREALITY OF MEMORY CAN BE EXPRESSED BY NO COLOR.”



Top: From Captain America #113, May 1969, inked by Tom Palmer.



Above: Captain America #111, Mar. 1969, inked by Joe Sinnott.



Strange Tales #167, Apr. 1968.

“I HAD WANTED TO DO CAPTAIN AMERICA A WHOLE LIFETIME. BECAUSE I GREW UP WITH COMICS IN THE FORTIES. IT WAS A LIFETIME AMBITION OF MINE TO DO THAT STRIP.”  
“THE PREVAILING MENTALITY HAD MARVELIZED HIM INTO AN EMBARRASSINGLY STALE POSITION, AND, FROM MY VIEWPOINT, NOBODY THERE KNEW WHAT TO DO WITH HIM. MY TRILOGY WAS AIMED AT REPOSITIONING CAP THEMATICALLY INTO AN AREA THAT BELONGED TO HIM.”

Strange Tales #167, Apr. 1968.







Above, left to right: Cover, double-page spread and full page from *Captain America* #113, May 1969, inked by Tom Palmer.



Below, left to right: *SHIELD* #3, Aug. 1968, and its double-page title spread, inked by Dan Atkins. Splash page from *SHIELD* #1, Jun. 1968, inked by Joe Sinnott.





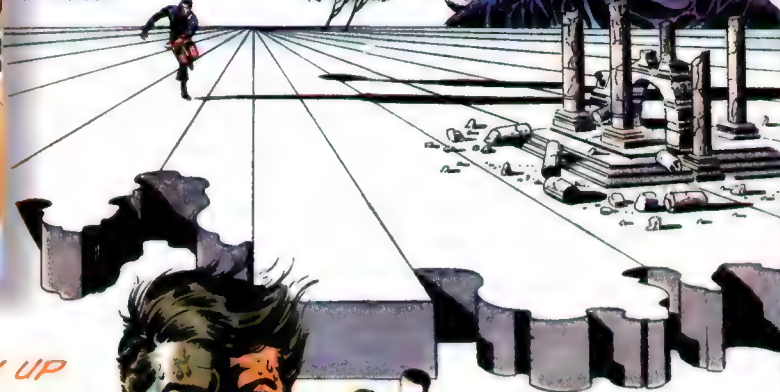
**POP SURREALISM** RUNS LIKE A THREAD THROUGH STERANKO'S SILVER AGE WORK, WITH 1968'S *SHIELD* COVER AND 1969'S *CAPTAIN AMERICA* INTERIORS THE MOST PROMINENT EXAMPLES.



Above: *SHIELD* #7, Dec. 1968. Center and opposite above: Two consecutive pages from *Captain America* #311, Mar. 1968, inked by Joe Sinnott.



"I DOUBT IF THERE WAS A MORE SUBVERSIVE CREATOR IN *OVERGROUND* COMICS... BUT I CHANGED THE RULES BECAUSE COMICS HAD BECOME APATHETIC AND HAD THE STINK OF DECAY ON THEM. 'WHAT I ATTACKED WERE MOLDERING, BRITTLE, AND FATIGUED ANACHRONISMS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN HACKED AWAY YEARS BEFORE I GOT THERE AND I DIDN'T EXCISE ANYTHING UNLESS I HAD A POSITIVE SOLUTION IN PLACE.'"



"I DON'T THINK I WANT TO SPREAD MY INTEREST OUT, FRAGMENT MY ATTENTION ON TWO OR THREE DIFFERENT STRIPS," STERANKO SAID. "I WANTED TO THINK ABOUT ONE, AND REALLY GET IT RIGHT, WORK ON IT, AND MAKE IT A MASTERPIECE."

Right: Splash page to the short story "At the Stroke of Midnight," *Tower of Shadows* #1, Sep. 1969. This was the culmination of Steranko's Silver Age experiments, and the model for all his future work. He focused on intense investigation and reinterpretation of a single genre at a time. "I'd like to do one of everything, to focus my thoughts upon every dramatic situation."



"GOOD OR BAD, I BROUGHT A VOLLEY OF NEW IDEAS TO THE FORM AND THOSE IDEAS OPENED THE DOOR FOR OTHERS..."







# NEAL ADAMS

**T**HE BODY OF WORK NEAL ADAMS PRODUCED NEAR THE END OF THE SILVER AGE IS USED SOMETHING AKIN TO A REVOLUTION IN THE MEDIUM DURING THIS PERIOD, WHICH STRADDLED THE 1960S AND 1970S. ADAMS FORGED DEFINITIVE ARTISTIC IDENTITIES FOR SEVERAL LEADING CHARACTERS, WHILE HIS RENDERINGS OF PRACTICALLY EVERY DC COMIC CHARACTER AND GENRE ON **HUNDREDS OF COVERS EFFECTIVELY** GAVE THE COMPANY ITS OWN **BULWARK** AGAINST **MARVEL'S** ARTISTIC HEGEMONY OF **JACK KIRBY** (AND LATER, **JIM STERANKO**).

THE KIRBY'S APPROACH WAS THE **ULTIMATE IN LARGER-THAN-LIFE STYLIZED EXAGGERATION**, ADAMS WAS THE **OPPOSITE**, A UNIQUE BLEND OF **DYNAMIC ACTION** AND **PHOTOGRAPHIC REALISM** THAT MADE THE **FANTASY WORLD** OF SUPERHEROES VIGOROUSLY **BELIEVABLE** IN WAYS **NEVER BEFORE SEEN**.

ADAMS' AUDACIOUS **COMMAND OF ACTION** (A **PERSPECTIVE** AND **FORESHORTENING**) ALLOWED HIS HEROES TO **WALK, RUN, LEAP AND FLY IN SMOOTH, FLOWING MOTIONS** THAT **BELIEVED** THEIR SUPERHUMAN **BULK**. CARTOON **STOCK** EXPRESSIONS WERE **REPLACED** WITH A **FULL RANGE OF HUMAN** NOT ONLY **EMOTIONS** BUT A **BRUSH INKING STYLE** — **ADDED** DURING HIS **YEARS** SPENDING IN THE **BLACK AND WHITE NEWSPAPER STRIP** — **SET NEW STANDARDS** FOR THE **DELICATION OF LIGHT AND SHADOW**, MAKING ADAMS THE **MOST INFLUENTIAL** OF THE **ARTISTS** SINCE **MILTON TERRILL**. THE **PIRATE** **CIBTIE** **CANNON**, **CANNON** **REBEL** **OUTS**, **COIL** **PO**, **TIONS** AND **PANEL SEQUENCES** WERE AS **BREATHKING** AS THEY WERE **RISK-TAKING**, KEEPING ADAMS **APACE** WITH HIS **CONTEMPORARY STERANKO**.

THE **QUALITATIVE** EFFECT OF ADAMS' WORK SIGNIFIED A **BEST CHANGE** IN THE **LOOK** OF COMIC BOOK ART ITSELF. HIS **TECHNICAL** **ABILITY** ENABLED HIS **WRITER** **COLLABORATORS** TO **BREAK NEW GROUND** TELLING THE **KINDS** OF **STORIES** THAT **BOULEVEYARD** **COIL** **BOOKS**, AND **IT** **DOING** **CONFLUENCED** AN **ENTIRE** **GENERATION** OF **ARTISTS**, **OPENING** THEIR **EYES** TO THE **POTENTIALS** OF THE **MEDIUM**.

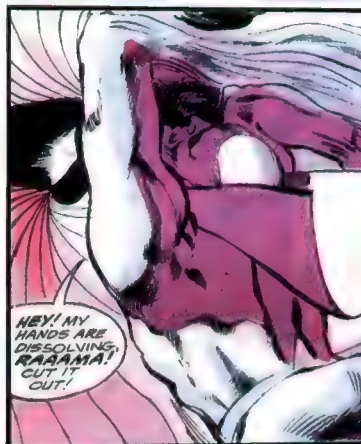
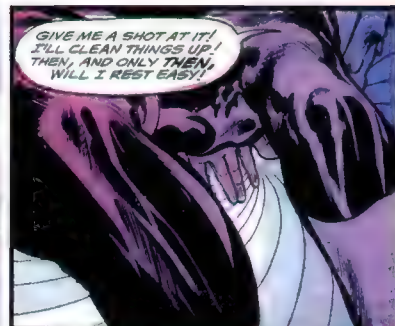
FOR ADAMS OCCUPIES A **UNIQUE** PLACE AT THE **CROSSROADS** OF **COMIC BOOK HISTORY**, PERHAPS **MORE** THAN ANY OTHER ARTIST, HIS WORK IS THE **BRIDGE** BETWEEN THE **END OF THE SILVER AGE** AND WITH ITS **DIVERSE** **ELEMENTS** OF **GRAPHIC** **STYLING**, **TOTALS** **MODERN** **AGE** OF **COMIC BOOK ART**.



"AN INNOVATOR IN SEVERAL SAYS, NEAL ADAMS, JUGGLING INCESSANTLY WITH HIS PICTURES TO STRIKING EFFECT, REMAINS THE MASTER OF NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE."  
— Graphis, 1972

"THE QUESTION IS, WHAT IS GREAT ART? IS GREAT ART BEAUTIFUL DRAWINGS, OR IS GREAT ART ART THAT TELLS A STORY WELL? IN A COMIC BOOK, THE GOAL IS THE STORY."  
— Neal Adams, 1998

IN 1962, AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-ONE, ADAMS WAS AWARDED THE ASSIGNMENT TO DRAW A DAILY AND SUNDAY NEWSPAPER COMIC STRIP BASED ON THE BEN CASEY TELEVISION SERIES (ABC-TV, 1962-66) -- THE YOUNGEST ARTIST TO ACHIEVE THAT DISTINCTION IN COMIC STRIP HISTORY. WHEN THE SHOW ENDED, SO DID THE STRIP, AND ADAMS MOVED ON...



(Right) The Deadman "Hidden head" page from Strange Adventures #216, Feb. 1969, and (above) its comic strip predecessor, the 1965 Ben Casey Sunday page. "Since Ben Casey was a soap opera," Adams said, "it wasn't by its nature exciting. How do you bring excitement to the dull? You make the audience think they're getting more than they're actually getting. You go into a close-up, you see details that you might not otherwise see, you create an expression that draws the eye, you move the camera. Design, layout and composition are what keep the audience interested."

AFTER A DETOUR INTO COMMERCIAL ILLUSTRATION, ADAMS ENTERED THE COMIC BOOK FIELD FIRST AT WARREN MAGAZINES DOING BLACK AND WHITE WORK. THEN, IN 1967, ADAMS ARRIVED AT DC COMICS, THE LUMBERING, SLUMBERING INDUSTRY GIANT REELING FROM UNDERDOG MARVEL'S SUCCESS. AFTER A HANDFUL OF COMEDY AND WAR BACKUP STORIES, ADAMS RECEIVED TWO SIMILAR SUPERHERO FEATURES ALMOST AT ONCE, FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF TWO SILVER AGE LEGENDS: MURPHY ANDERSON ON THE SPECTRE, WHICH ADAMS WOULD ONLY DRAW BRIEFLY, AND GARIMME INFANTINO, WHO HAD JUST BEEN MADE DC'S EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, ON DEADMAN... THE FEATURE THAT WOULD MAKE ADAMS' COMIC BOOK CAREER. BUT IT WAS PRECISELY HIS COMIC STRIP BACKGROUND -- AND, PRIOR TO THAT, COMIC BOOK-STYLE ADVERTISING ILLUSTRATION EXPERIENCE -- THAT GAVE ADAMS THE TOOLS WITH WHICH HE BUILT HIS LEGEND. "FOR THREE AND A HALF YEARS, I HAD BEEN DRAWING DAILY STRIPS THREE PANELS ACROSS, WHICH WAS VERY CONSTRICTING," SAID ADAMS. "SUDDENLY THE OPPORTUNITY TO DESIGN A COMIC BOOK PAGE WAS AVAILABLE TO ME, AND I JUST BLASTED OUT. THE FREEDOM WAS INCREDIBLE."





I HAD WORKED FROM PHOTOGRAPHY  
SO MUCH I'D BE ABLE TO DRAW THE PERSON  
INSIDE OF THE READER WOULD RESPOND  
TO THE FACE AND EXPRESSION AS THOUGH  
SOMEONE WAS IN THERE. I DENY IT  
WASN'T JUST A DRAWING ON A PAGE.  
IT WAS A PERSON. AND WHEN THAT  
PERSON GOT LURED ABOUT SUDDENLY  
FELT ANOTHER YOU FELT IT  
ALONG WITH THEM.

**All art from Strange Adventures Comics.**

**Clockwise from top left:**

1. Issue #208, Jan. 1968.
2. Issue #213, Aug. 1968.
3. Issue #215, Dec. 1968.
- 4 & 5. Issue #216, Feb. 1969.
6. Issue #212, Jun. 1968
7. Aquaman #52, Aug. 1970.

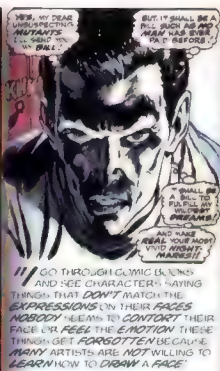
**Background: Sketch for**  
**Shel Dorf, circa 1967.**

"I DON'T WANT TO  
BE A PART OF  
ANYTHING THAT  
WILL BE USED  
TO KILL PEOPLE."  
THAT WAS THE FIRST  
REMEMBERING WE  
HAD. THE REMEMBERING ARE THE  
STORIES WE REMEMBER WAITING  
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE BUT NOT FOR  
THE ART. FOR THE STORY. THEY'RE  
REMEMBERING HIS DRIVING FORCE  
TO FIND ICEMANS MURDERERS. THE  
HOOK THAT ACCELERATED AS THE  
STORY WENT ON. THEY WANTED TO  
KNOW WHO WAS THE HOOK.





Green Lantern/Green Arrow #63, May 1973.



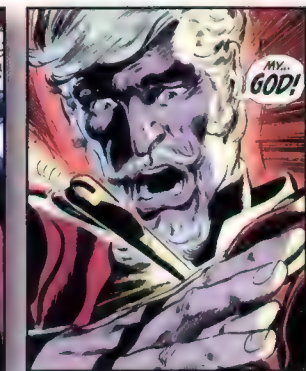
X-Men #61, Oct '69, inked by Tom Palmer.



Green Lantern/Green Arrow #78, Apr 1970



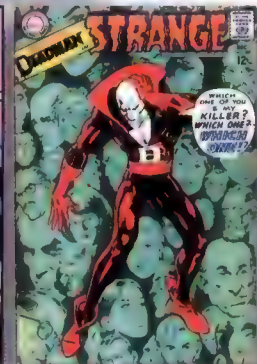
X-Men #61.



Green Lantern/Green Arrow #80, Sep. 1971



Green Lantern/Green Arrow #66.



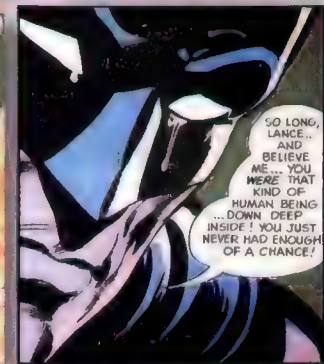
Strange Adventures #201, Dec. 1967.



X-Men #57, Jan 1969, inked by Palmer



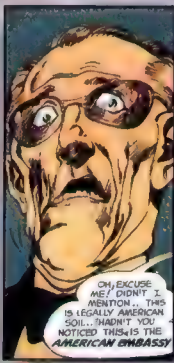
Green Lantern/Green Arrow #66.



Bravo & Bold #63, May, 1968



Green Lantern/Green Arrow #66, Nov. 1971, inked by Dick Giordano



Bravo & Bold #63, May, 1968



Strange Adventures #204, Jan. 1969.



X-Men #57, Jan 1969, inked by Palmer.



Green Lantern/Green Arrow #66.

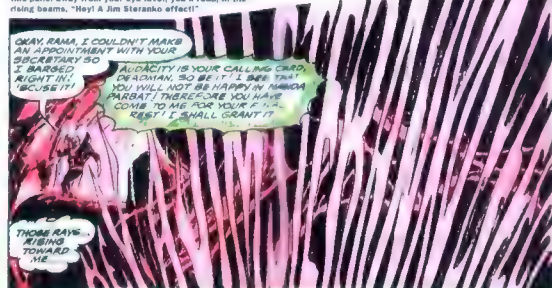




Above: *Strange Tales* #200, Mar. 1968, inked by Joe Sinnott  
Below: #200, May 1968, inked by Sinnott



Below: *Strange Adventures* #215, Sep. 1969, if you still this panel away from your eye level, you'll read, in the wrong beam, "Ney! A Jim Steranko effort!"



WHEN I DID THE STERANKO EFFECT PANEL IN DEADMAN, ADAMS SAID I WAS TIPPING MY HAT TO HIM. I NEVER FELT IN ANY WAY COMPETITIVE. WHAT STERANKO DID AT THE TIME HAD ALMOST NO RELATIONSHIP TO WHAT I DID. WE WEREN'T TRYING TO DO THE SAME THING. (FELT WE WERE A COMMUNITY LIKE STERANKO, I WAS SOMEbody WITH A REASONABLE KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS THAT WERE COMMON OUTSIDE OF COMIC BOOKS. SUDDENLY SLIPPING INTO THE FIELD AND BEHIND, SLAPPED EVERYBODY IN THE FACE.

HE (STERANKO) WAS DEFINED BY A GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATOR. HIS GOAL WAS TO CREATE NEW AND IMPACTFUL IMAGES. GRAPHICALLY, STERANKO WAS LOOKING TO PUNCH YOU IN THE FACE THAT CAME FROM KIRBY.

HE WAS COMING FROM A MORE TRADITIONAL BACKGROUND AND DIRECTION. I TENDED TO DO A BETTER DRAWING. HE DESIGNED IN A WAY EXCEPT WHERE IT RELATED TO GRAPHICS. GRAPHICS WERE NOT IN ONLY FOCUS. THEY WEREN'T HIS.

Above: Jim Steranko, 1971.

ONLY FOCUS EITHER, BUT THEY WERE CERTAINLY OVERPOWERING.

I WAS DOING MANY OTHER THINGS, LEVEL AFTER LEVEL. I WAS THRILLED WITH THE PAGE, WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIMENT, AS WAS STERANKO. HE WAS, IN SOME WAYS, MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE. HE WAS ALSO VERY AWARE OF THE MODERN WORLD HIS WORK SAYS, IN EFFECT, "WAKE UP EVERYBODY! DON'T YOU KNOW WE'RE HERE!"

"NEAL ADAMS IS DOING WORK THAT IS PROBABLY UNSURPASSABLE. I'M A GREAT ADMIRER OF ALL OF HIS PROCEEDINGS. I THINK NEAL IS THE MOST TALENTED OF THE NEWCOMERS IN THE BUSINESS. NEAL DID THE BEN CASEY SITRIL FOR YEARS AND YEARS, SO HE'S GOT THREE TIMES AS MUCH MORE DRAWING TIME IN THAN I DO, BUT AS A COMIC BOOK ARTIST, HE'S VERY EXCITING, DOING A LOT OF IMAGINATIVE THINGS."

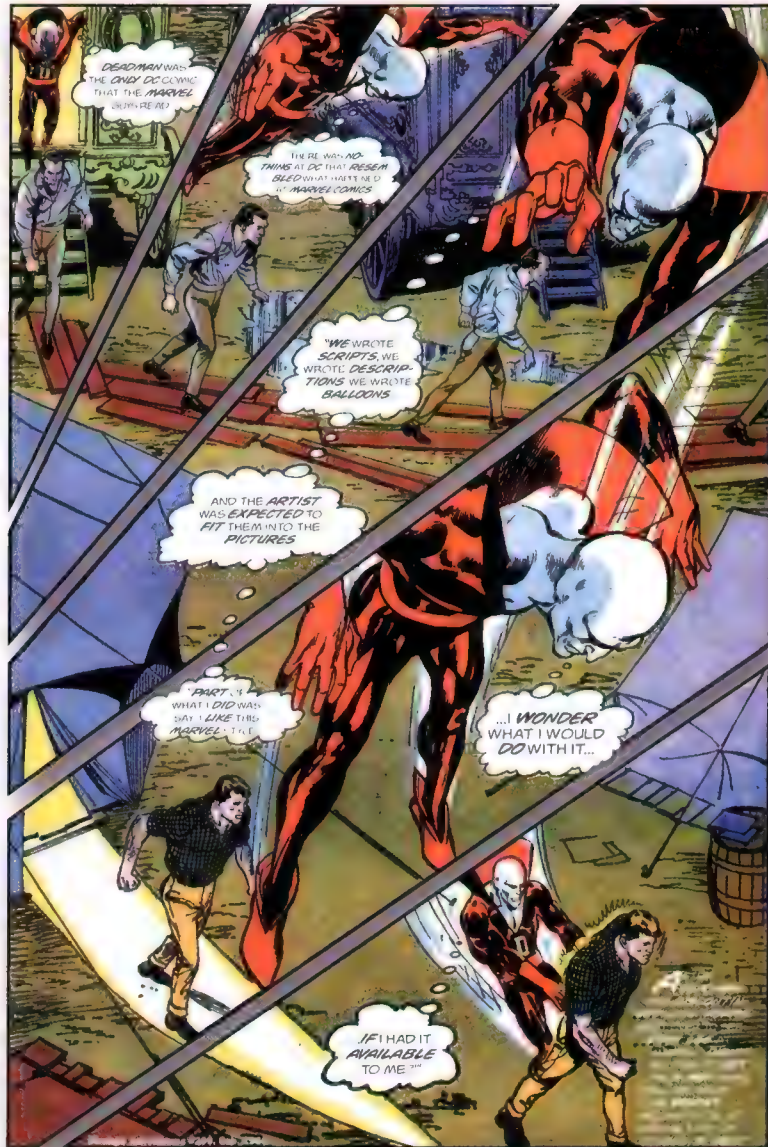
-- JIM STERANKO, 1971.

Above: Neal Adams, 1969.



Above and below: *Strange Adventures* #215, Feb. 1969







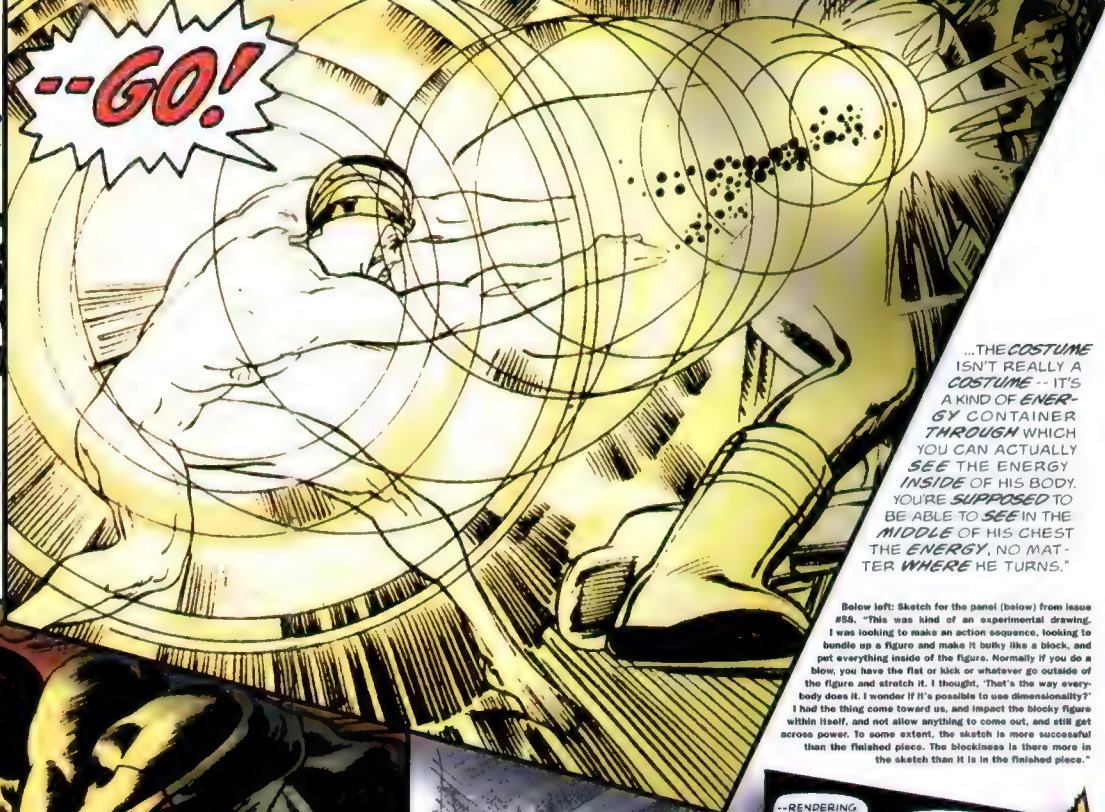
"I HAD NO IDEA WHAT I WOULD DO WITH THE X-MEN. PERHAPS INTENTIONALLY BECAUSE NOBODY CARED ABOUT THEM, I COULD REMOLD THEM. SO THE PROCESS WAS TO REMOLD THEM FROM THE CORE THAT KIRBY HAD BEGUN.

"ENOUGH BAD HAD BEEN DONE TO THE X-MEN, THAT IN A WAY I COULD RECREATE THEM AND THEY WOULD BECOME MY CHARACTERS. SO TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, THEY DID BECOME MY CHARACTERS -- ESPECIALLY THE NEW CHARACTERS.

"HAVOK (RIGHT) WAS CERTAINLY NOT A KIRBY-TYPE OF CHARACTER; HE WAS SOMETHING NEW AND DIFFERENT, AND A LITTLE HIPPER, LIKE A MIME WHO MOVES AROUND -- YOU LOOK AT THE SILHOUETTE OF THE BODY, YOU DON'T LOOK AT THE INTERIOR. IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THAT WOULD BE A GREAT IDEA FOR A COSTUME...

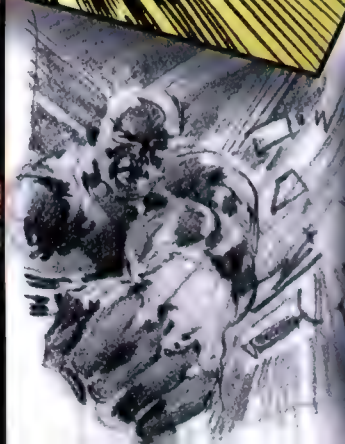
All art from X-Men comics written by Roy Thomas and inked by Tom Palmer.

Right: Issue #51, Jul. 1969  
Below left: Issue #180, Aug. 1969.



...THE COSTUME ISN'T REALLY A COSTUME -- IT'S A KIND OF ENERGY CONTAINER THROUGH WHICH YOU CAN ACTUALLY SEE THE ENERGY INSIDE OF HIS BODY. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO SEE IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS CHEST THE ENERGY, NO MATTER WHERE HE TURNS."

Below left: Sketch for the panel (below) from issue #55. "This was kind of an experimental drawing. I was looking to make an action sequence, looking to bundle up a figure and make it bulky like a block, and get everything inside of the figure. Normally if you do a blow, you have the flat or kick or whatever go outside of the figure and stretch it. I thought, 'That's the way everybody does it. I wonder if it's possible to use dimensionality?' I had the thing come toward us, and impact the blocky figure within itself, and not allow anything to come out, and still get across power. To some extent, the sketch is more successful than the finished piece. The blockiness is there more in the sketch than it is in the finished piece."





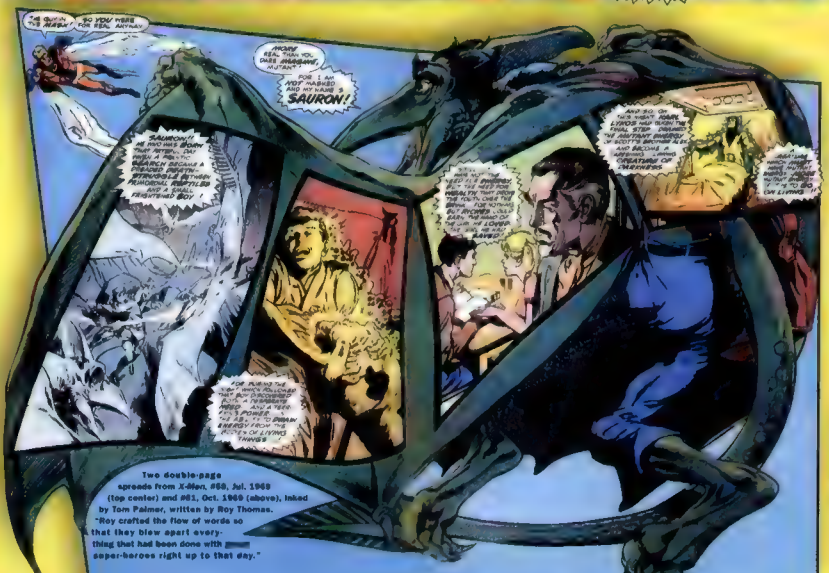
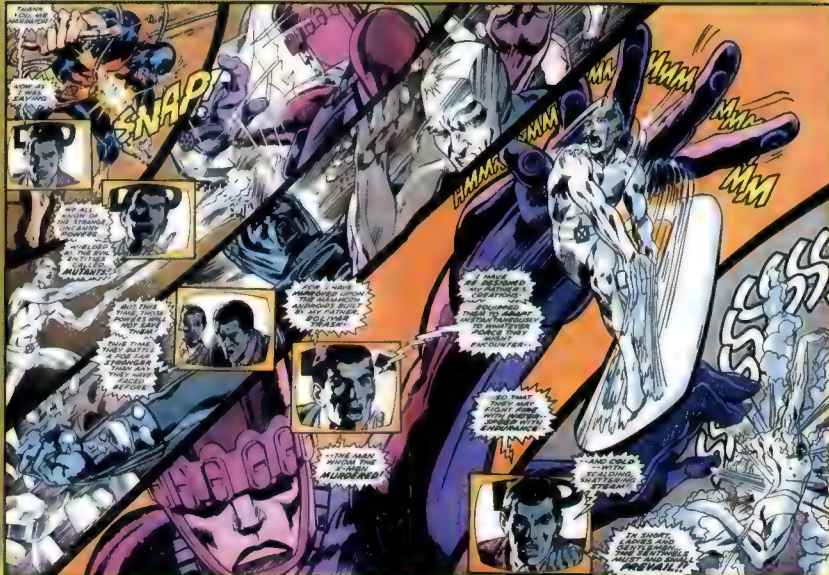


Strange Adventures #216, Feb. 1969.

"I DON'T THINK OF MYSELF AS AN ARTIST; I THINK OF MYSELF AS A STORYTELLER. THE ART IS THE FACILITY I LEARNED ALONG THE WAY IN ORDER TO TELL A STORY."



X-Men #68, Jul. 1969.



Two double-page spreads from X-Men #68, Jul. 1969 (top center) and #69, Oct. 1969 (above), inked by Tom Palmer, written by Roy Thomas. "Roy crafted the flow of words so that they blew apart every thing that had been done with comic superheroes right up to that day."



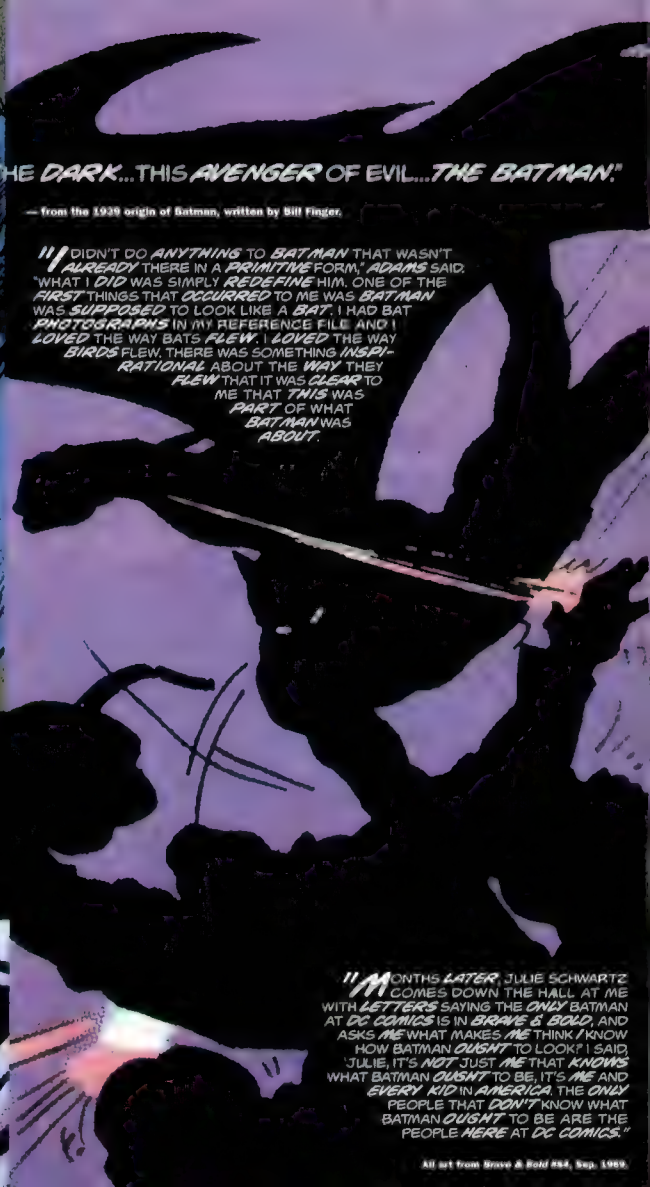
Green Lantern/Green Arrow #86, Nov. 1971, written by O'Neil, inked by Dick Giordano.

"RELATIVE TO STYLE, I TREAT EACH PROJECT THAT I DO UNIQUELY FOR THAT PROJECT. WHEN I DID THE X-MEN, I DECIDED HOW I WANTED TO DO THE X-MEN; IT REALLY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH DEADMAN OR BATMAN; I FELT THE PROJECT DESERVED MY UNIQUE REPRESENTATION."



"Batman was never my character. I kind of turned him into my character," said Adams. Left: Brave & Bold #84, Sep. 1969, written by Bob Haney. "People remember the Bob Haney Brave & Bold," Adams said. "They all had great beginnings and great endings. They had drama in the middle. They had flesh and meat and potatoes. They were all strong."





...A CREATURE OF THE NIGHT, BLACK, TERRIBLE... A WEIRD

FIGURE OF THE DARK...THIS AVENGER OF EVIL...THE BATMAN!"

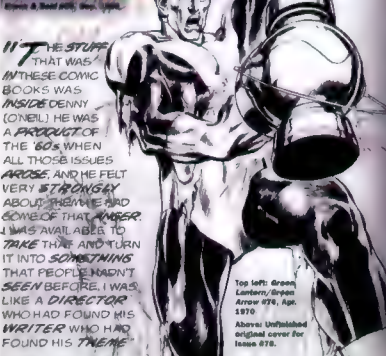
— from the 1939 origin of Batman, written by Bill Finger.

"I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO BATMAN THAT WASN'T  
ALREADY THERE IN A PRIMITIVE FORM," ADAMS SAID.  
"WHAT I DID WAS SIMPLY REDEFINE HIM. ONE OF THE  
FIRST THINGS THAT OCCURRED TO ME WAS BATMAN  
WAS SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE A BAT. I HAD BAT  
PHOTOGRAPHS IN MY REFERENCE FILE AND I  
LOVED THE WAY BATS FLEW. I LOVED THE WAY  
BIRDS FLEW. THERE WAS SOMETHING INSPI-  
RATIONAL ABOUT THE WAY THEY  
FLEW THAT IT WAS CLEAR  
TO ME THAT THIS  
PART OF WHAT  
BATMAN WAS  
ABOUT."

"MONTHS LATER, JULIE SCHWARTZ  
COMES DOWN THE HALL AT ME  
WITH LETTERS SAYING THE ONLY BATMAN  
AT DC COMICS IS IN BRAVE & BOLD, AND  
ASKS ME WHAT MAKES ME THINK I KNOW  
HOW BATMAN OUGHT TO LOOK? I SAID,  
"JULIE, IT'S NOT JUST ME THAT KNOWS  
WHAT BATMAN OUGHT TO BE. IT'S ME AND  
EVERY KID IN AMERICA. THE ONLY  
PEOPLE THAT DON'T KNOW WHAT  
BATMAN OUGHT TO BE ARE THE  
PEOPLE HERE AT DC COMICS."



STOP! this is the NEW  
**GREEN LANTERN** CO-STARRING **GREEN ARROW**



"THE STUFF THAT WAS IN THESE COMIC BOOKS WAS INSIDE DENNY COHEN. HE WAS A PRODUCT OF THE '60s WHEN ALL THOSE ISSUES AROSE, AND HE FELT VERY STRONGLY ABOUT THEM. HE HAD SOMEONE THAT HAD BEEN ABLE TO TAKE THEM AND TURN IT INTO SOMETHING THAT PEOPLE HADN'T SEEN BEFORE. I WAS LIKE A DIRECTOR WHO HAD FOUND HIS WRITER WHO HAD FOUND HIS THEME."

"ROBIN HOOD WAS THE PERFECT ANTIHERO-REBEL. FIGHT FOR THE UNDERDOG HERO MODEL FOR THE TIME. BY MAKING GREEN ARROW INTO A COOL ROBIN HOOD, I HAD SERVED HIM UP AS AN ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT FOIL TO COUNTER GREEN LANTERN'S CONFORMING, STATUS QUO WORK-SHIPPING, WHITE DO-GOODER, BLIND KIND OF 1950s CREEP ATTITUDE."

Top left: Green Lantern/Green Arrow #76, Apr. 1976. Above: Unpublished original cover for issue #76.

I BEEN READIN' ABOUT YOU... HOW YOU WORK FOR THE BLUE SKINS... AND HOW ON A PLANET SOMEPLACE YOU HELPED OUT THE ORANGE SKINS...

...AND YOU DONE CONSIDERABLE FOR THE PURPLE SKINS! ONLY THERE'S SKINS YOU NEVER BOTHERED WITH--!



...THE BLACK SKINS! I WANT TO KNOW... HOW COME?!

ANSWER ME THAT, MR. GREEN LANTERN!



Sequence from issue #76, written by Denny O'Neil. "A lot of people think this [second panel] was drawn from a photograph," Adams said. "I would crave for a photograph like that."



I... CAN'T...

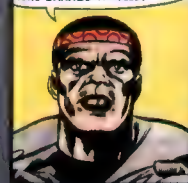






and Billy's Black Panther (Silverman Black of Federal Wobblers) was not only the first black superhero...

NOW THAT THE HUNT IS OVER... THE GAME IS ENDED... I SHALL OFFER YOU THE EXPLANATION... FOR YOU HAVE EARNED IT! HOPE!



...but his debut in July of 1969 (in Fantasy Four #23) preceded the formation of the Black Panther Party by three months.



We named black superheroes, like Ironman, an American activist living in Haiti.



...and Billy's Black Panther (Silverman Black of Federal Wobblers) was not only the first black superhero...

WHEN EDITOR STEWART TOLD ADAMS IN 1971 THAT HE WAS PLANNING ON INTRODUCING ANOTHER GREEN LANTERN TO THE BOOK -- ANOTHER WHITE GREEN LANTERN -- ADAMS RESPONDED:



I DON'T BELIEVE YOU MISSED...  
OKAY... I DIDN'T. LISTEN, WHITEY, THAT WINDBAG WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT! HE'S A RACIST...  
...AND HE FIGURES ON CLIMBING TO THE WHITE HOUSE ON THE BACKS OF MY PEOPLE!

ADAMS COMES TO EARTH WITH HIS LANTERN, AND GIVES IT TO THE MOST WORTHY PERSON ON EARTH: A WHITE ANGLO-SAXON PROTESTANT AMERICAN AIRPLANE PILOT. THEN, THE ALIENS HAD TO HAVE A BACKUP GREEN LANTERN, SO THEY FIND A SECOND MOST WORTHY MAN ON EARTH: A WHITE BLONDE AMERICAN GYM TEACHER. WELL, THAT'S KIND OF A STRETCH, CONSIDERING THE POPULATION OF THE PLANET. NOW THEY'RE GOING TO FIND ANOTHER WHITE GUY FOR THE THIRD TIME? THERE AREN'T ANY ASIANS OR BLACKS IN THE WORLD WHO ARE LANTERN-WORTHY? WE COULD HAVE A BLACK GREEN LANTERN, NOT BECAUSE WE'RE LIBERALS, BUT BECAUSE IT JUST MAKES SENSE.

Above: The first African-American superhero from the street (Adams: "Why don't we give him a regular name? How about John Stewart? He's an architect who's out of work.") with dialogue preasing David Duke's candidacy by over a decade. From Green Lantern/Green Arrow #87, Jan. 1972. Inked by Dick Giordano



ALTHOUGH I ONLY CONSULTED WITH ADAMS ON SOME OF MY CONCEPTS, IT WASN'T UNTIL THE END OF THE SERIES THAT I MADE ANY REAL STORY CONTRIBUTION, AND THAT WAS THE DRUG ISSUES.

Above: From Green Lantern/Green Arrow #86, Sep. 1971, the first part of the 3-part drug story, "Beowulf's Don't Fly."



OOOO... YOU COMIN' ON STRONG! SO YOU GET INSULTED, HEY? "CHINK'S" NOTHIN' COMPARED TO THE NAME'S I'M CALLED...

NIGGER IS FOR OPENERS! THEN THEY GET REAL POETIC! BUT IT AIN'T THE NAMES THEY CALL YOU, IT'S WHAT'S BEHIND THEIR EYES, BABY. THIS IS MY REASON FOR SHOOTIN'...

"DANNY AND I SPENT SOME TIME AT PHOENIX HOUSE AND PLACES LIKE THAT. I GOT TO SEE AN AWFUL LOT OF THAT CLOSE UP."

Below: From Green Lantern/Green Arrow #87, Jan. 1972. Inked by Dick Giordano



"YOU DON'T GET MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO DO JESUS"

"THIS WAS A HARD STORY BECAUSE WE REALLY WANTED TO GET A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF TENSION INTO IT -- WE WANTED TO MAKE CLASSIC IMAGES. WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THESE PAGES ARE THESE PROVOCATING IMAGES: CHRIST'S FACE WITH THE BIRD ON HIS SHOULDER (ACROSS PAGE), THIS IMAGE AGAINST THE PLANE. ALL THESE IMAGES, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, HAD TO BE SHOWN THEIR MOMENT ON STAGE TO SAY THEIR LINES, SO WHEN YOU'D GET TO THE END IT WOULD BE THE LAST THING YOU'D EXPECT IN A COMIC BOOK: CHRIST KILLED ALL OVER AGAIN."



GREETINGS, MY FRIEND! I AM ISAAC!



"THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS EXPRESSING THE BEST OF WHAT WE ARE. THAT'S ONE OF THE REASONS ARTISTS AND CREATORS ARE ATTRACTED TO COMIC BOOKS. THEY GIVE US AN OPPORTUNITY TO SAY SOMETHINGS ABOUT THE BEST OF WHAT WE ARE OR WHAT WE'D LIKE TO BE."



WHAT'S THE IDEA...? THAT WAS A NINE-MILLION DOLLAR AIRCRAFT!

SEND ME A BILL!

Art: Mike Green, Lanterns/Green Arrow #60, May 1972, written by: Dennis O'Neil



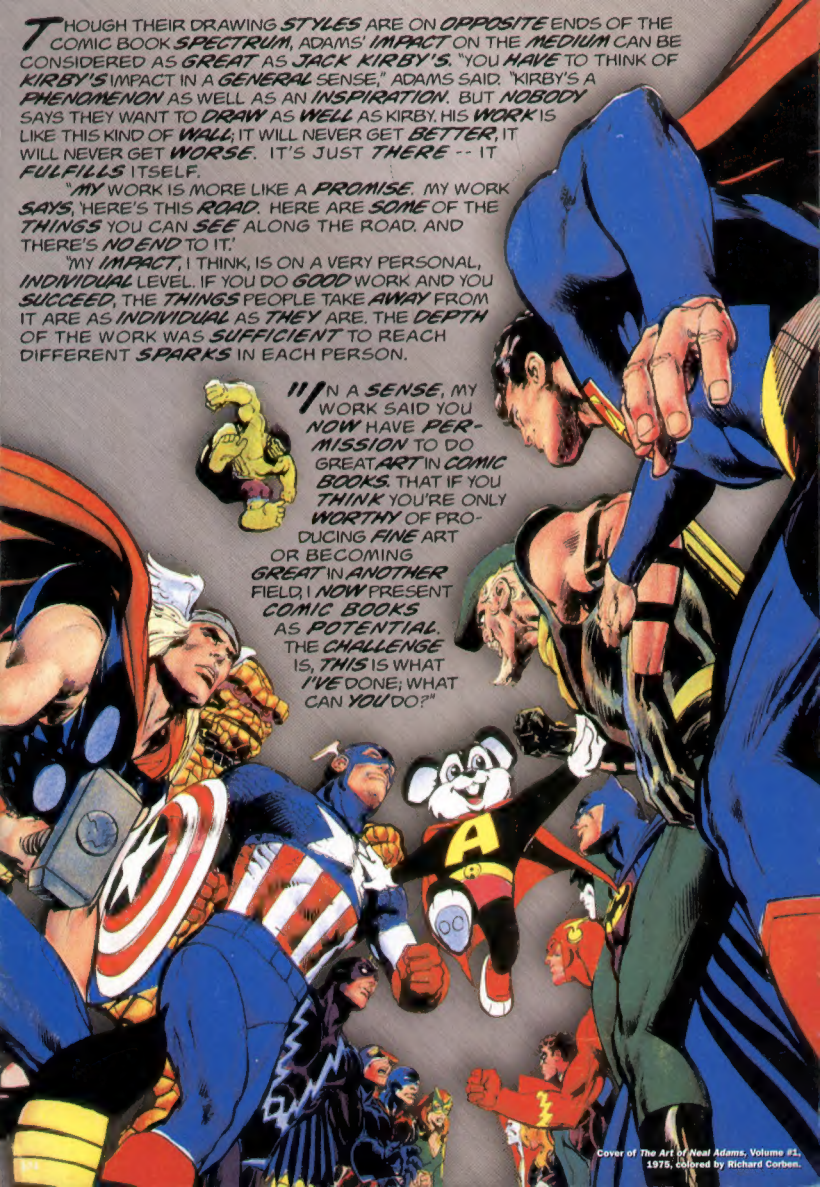
**T**HOUGH THEIR DRAWING *STYLES* ARE ON *OPPOSITE* ENDS OF THE COMIC BOOK *SPECTRUM*, ADAMS' *IMPACT* ON THE *MEDIUM* CAN BE CONSIDERED AS *GREAT* AS *JACK KIRBY'S*. "YOU *HAVE* TO THINK OF *KIRBY'S* *IMPACT* IN A *GENERAL* SENSE," ADAMS SAID. "KIRBY'S A *PHENOMENON* AS WELL AS AN *INSPIRATION*. BUT *NOBODY* SAYS THEY WANT TO *DRAW* AS *WELL* AS KIRBY. HIS *WORK* IS LIKE THIS KIND OF *WALL*; IT WILL NEVER GET *BETTER*. IT WILL NEVER GET *WORSE*. IT'S JUST *THERE* -- IT *FULFILLS* ITSELF.

"*MY* *WORK* IS MORE LIKE A *PROMISE*. *MY* *WORK* *SAYS*, 'HERE'S THIS *ROAD*. HERE ARE *SOME* OF THE *THINGS* YOU CAN *SEE* ALONG THE *ROAD*. AND THERE'S *NO* *END* TO IT.'

"*MY* *IMPACT*, I THINK, IS ON A VERY PERSONAL, *INDIVIDUAL* LEVEL. IF YOU DO *GOOD* *WORK* AND YOU *SUCCEED*, THE *THINGS* PEOPLE TAKE *AWAY* FROM IT ARE AS *INDIVIDUAL* AS *THEY* ARE. THE *DEPTH* OF THE *WORK* WAS *SUFFICIENT* TO REACH DIFFERENT *SPARKS* IN EACH PERSON.



"IN A *SENSE*, *MY* *WORK* SAID YOU *NOW* HAVE *PERMISSION* TO DO *GREAT* *ART* IN *COMIC BOOKS*. THAT IF YOU *THINK* YOU'RE ONLY *WORTHY* OF *PRODUCING* *FINE* *ART* OR BECOMING *GREAT* IN *ANOTHER* *FIELD*, I *NOW* *PRESENT* *COMIC BOOKS* AS *POTENTIAL*. THE *CHALLENGE* IS, *THIS* IS WHAT *I'VE* *DONE*; WHAT *CAN* *YOU* *DO*?"









# "Man and SUPERMAN!"

BY ARLEN SCHUMER  
COLOR BY SHERRI WOLFGANG

MY FATHER DIED FOUR MONTHS AFTER I WAS BORN; MY BROTHER AND I WERE RAISED BY OUR MOTHER. SOON, THOUGH, PRESSURE FROM RELATIVES TO PROVIDE PROPER MALE ROLE MODELS RESULTED IN HER SENDING US TO SUMMER SLEEPAWAY CAMP WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG. I DID FIND A FATHER FIGURE THERE, BUT IT WASN'T ANY OF THE COUNSELORS... IT WAS SUPERMAN! COMICS WERE A BIG PART OF CAMP;

THOUGH THERE WERE ALWAYS A FEW ARCHIES IN THE MIX, MOST WERE SUPERHEROES...



SIX YEAR-OLD CAMP MERRIMAC, MERRIMAC, NEW YORK, 1967

—COMIC BOOK!

OF ALL THE SUPERHEROES, SUPERMAN MADE THE BIGGEST IMPRESSION ON ME! BARELY KNEW HOW TO READ, BUT I COULD "READ" SUPERMAN! THROUGH HIM, UNDERSTOOD

COMIC BOOKS TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING I KNOW! HOW MANY OTHER 8-YEAR OLDS HAD A VOCABULARY RIFE WITH WORDS LIKE INVULNERABLE—ELONGATED—INCOGNITO—ORIGIN—AND HOAX! AND PHRASES LIKE, "TO NO AVALI!"



THAT'S ME IN 8TH GRADE, 1972, GIVING AN ORAL REPORT ON THE 1963 SUPERMAN VS. CAPTAIN MARVEL LAWSUIT—COMPLETE WITH VISUAL AIDS—FOR EXTRA CREDIT!



BACK OF POSTCARD TO MOM, AUGUST 2, 1965

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG -- WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A HERO! IF MORAL INSTRUCTION AND INSPIRATION ARE WHAT FATHERS ARE SUPPOSED TO PROVIDE, THEN SUPERMAN WAS MY DE FACTO FATHER!

COMIC BOOK ART INSPIRED MY LIFE AND CAREER! THOUGH IT'S OFTEN TREATED LIKE A STEPCHILD BY MAINSTREAM CULTURE, THE DEBT I OWE ONE OF THE GREATEST AMERICAN ARTFORMS OF THE 20TH CENTURY CAN NEVER FULLY BE REPAID!



"A MAN'S WORK IS NOTHING BUT THIS SLOW TREK TO REDISCOVER, THROUGH THE DETOURS OF ART, THOSE TWO OR THREE GREAT AND SIMPLE IMAGES IN WHOSE PRESENCE HIS HEART FIRST OPENED."  
—ALBERT CAMUS



# THE SILVER AGE OF COMIC BOOK ART

## WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY ARLEN SCHUMER

A book unlike any ever before seen, *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art* is multi-talented Arlen Schumer's dazzling pop-art tribute to the great mainstream artists working in the field of sequential art during the 1960s. Showcasing the author's brilliant combination of insightful prose and eye-popping graphic design, this book details the achievements of an amazing array of comics creators and the unforgettable characters they delineated during that turbulent decade: Jack Kirby's raging, thermonuclear-charged Hulk; the breathless excitement of Carmine Infantino's Flash; mind-expanding Steve Ditko's trippy Doctor Strange; Gil Kane's vibrantly heroic Green Lantern; the moody and dashing Daredevil by Gene Colan; the explosive dynamism of Neal Adams' X-Men; Joe Kubert's gritty, two-fisted soldier, Sgt. Rock; and Steranko's innovative film noir-esque Nick Fury. Finally, in a glorious format befitting their stature as comic book art masters, the knights of the Silver Age are given their due.

Set between the dawning of the Space Age and the twilight of the Age of Aquarius, this magnificent volume reveals just what made these comics — and the supremely-talented craftsmen who illustrated them — so innovative and ground-breaking. Schumer expertly captures the mind-altering essence of those heady days, an era super-charged with creativity and change, when the lines between reality and fantasy blurred in the four-color panels of American superhero comics. The early 1960s "imaginary stories" — quaint and fanciful tales having little in common with the day's headlines — transformed over the years to become grippingly relevant parables using costumed characters to explore the ever-so real issues facing American society during those incendiary times: Vietnam, drugs, civil rights, feminism, pollution, and myriad other hot-button controversies of the day. This is the story of how mainstream comics adapted to the winds of change in American life and how an extra-ordinarily talented group of artists rose to the challenge, determined to infuse their art form with significance and meaning.

Ultimately, what is so extraordinary about this masterwork is the sheer appropriateness of the author's approach to a subject of which he is so knowledgeable and articulate. In tackling the saga of a group of artisans working in outrageous times, Schumer painstakingly melds commanding and authoritative text (usually integrating the artists' own words) with mind-blowing graphic layouts to create a totally new kind of history, in a form superbly grasping what it is that

new kind of history, in a form superbly grasping what it is that makes the medium a uniquely American art form, the combining of words and pictures to create something new: the comic book.

— Jon B. Cooke

Editor, *Comic Book Artist* magazine

"Arlen Schumer documents an important period in comic book history, told with an explosive format and stunning design. It reflects the kinetic rhythm of the era."

— Will Eisner

Comics' greatest innovator, creator of *The Spirit* and father of the graphic novel

"A lovingly crafted tribute to the superhero comic of the 1960s, *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art* recaptures the four-color visionary surge of the era, its jet-age psychedelic rush of imagination and the titanic, luminous figures, both real and imaginary, that glittered in its firmament. For a brief moment in the late 20th century, it seemed as if the spirit of the age wore a vivid leopard, a chest emblem, and traveled in a strobing blur of speed lines. For anyone with any interest in or affection for that moment, this beautiful volume is indispensable."

— Alan Moore

Author of *Watchmen*, *From Hell*, and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*



Photo: David O'Connor

### Arlen Schumer

As one of the foremost historians of comic book art, Schumer has written for *Print* magazine and numerous comic book industry trade publications. He has lectured at universities and cultural institutions across the country, most recently at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City, where he presented, "Superheroes in the 1960s: Comics & Counterculture," based on this book. As a co-founder and partner — with wife Sherri Wolfgang — of the Dynamic Duo Studio, Schumer is one of the field's most idiosyncratic practitioners, creating comic book-styled art for advertising and editorial markets, their work gracing such diverse publications as *The New York Times*, *Wired* magazine and *Rolling Stone*. His other books include *Visions From the Twilight Zone*, and Neal Adams: *The Sketch Book*. He lives in Westport, Connecticut, with his wife and two daughters, Maya and Eden.

